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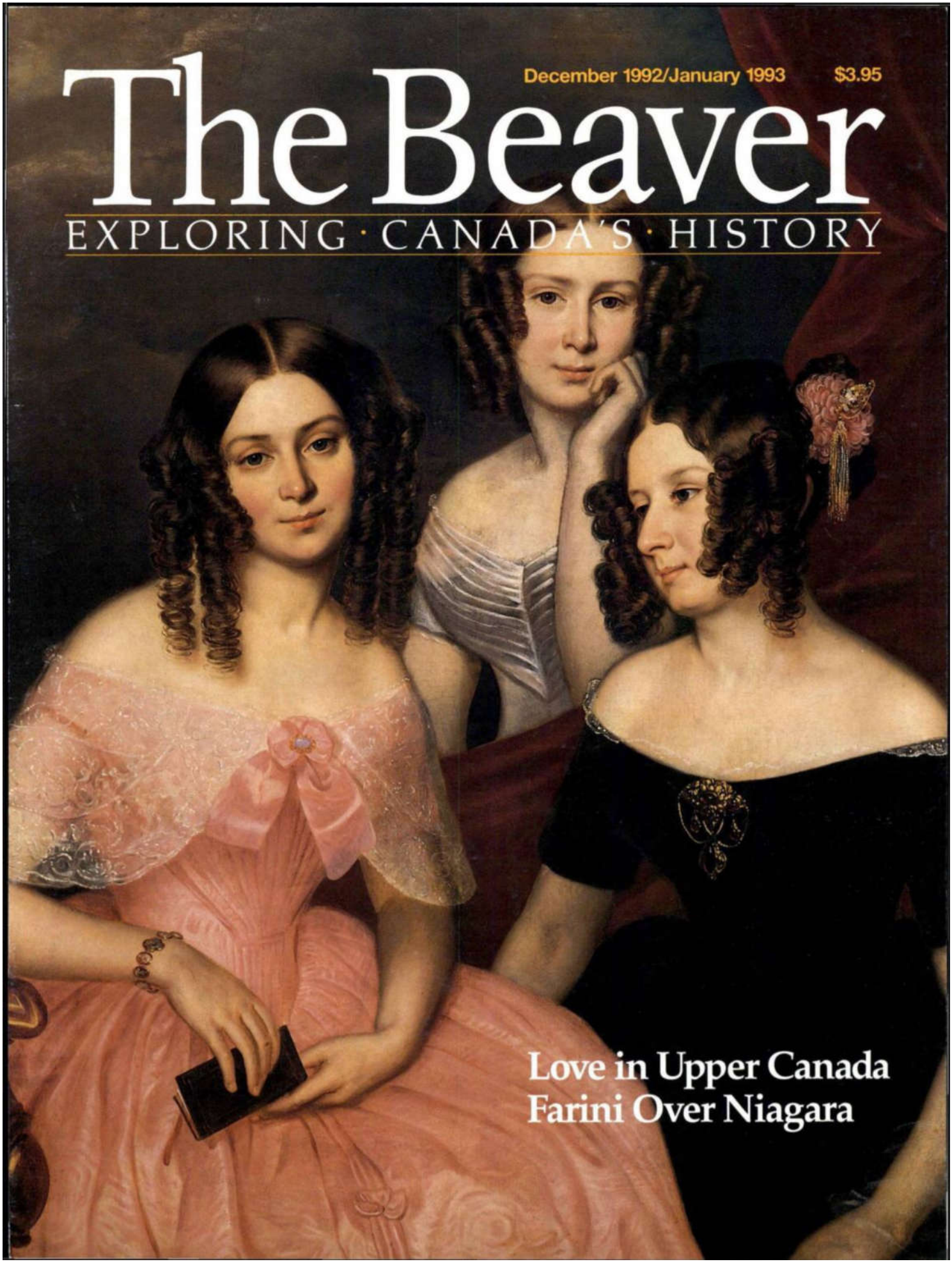
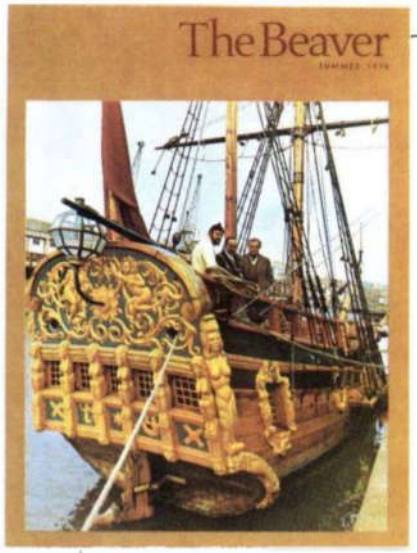
The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY



Love in Upper Canada
Farini Over Niagara



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Editor:
Christopher Dafoe
Managing Editor:
Carol Preston

Advertising Representative:
Sandra Waller
496 Cranbrooke Ave.,
North York, Ontario,
M5M 1N7
(416) 782-7401.

Advisory Board:
Shirlee A. Smith
Michael Bliss
William Nobleman
Rolph Huband

Cover:
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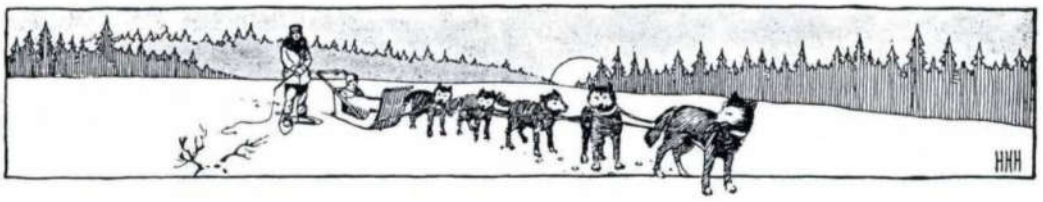


Winter Dreams

As the snows of another winter fall on the fields of the Dominion at the cold end of Canada's 125th year of nationhood, Canadians are contemplating the failure of the latest attempt at constitutional reform. The nation has struggled up this particular hill so often that foreign observers must be reminded of the sad tale of poor Sisyphus, King of Corinth, who was condemned for his sins to spend eternity in Hades rolling a great stone up a steep hill, only to see it roll back to the bottom each time the summit was attained.

The "accords" of Meech Lake and Charlottetown are only the latest in a long series of attempts to revise and enhance the Canadian constitution. Sixty years ago Canadian leaders were struggling to find an acceptable amending formula and the debate has continued over that question and others down to the present time at Dominion-Provincial Conferences, meetings of "First Ministers" and in Parliament, more often than not with little or no success.

The constitution, in fact, was a bone of contention from the moment that the first tentative steps were taken toward a union of the British North American colonies in 1864. Worries about Quebec's place in the constitution, for example, pre-date the passing of the British North America Act and many of the concerns expressed in the 1860s are still heard today.

In the Confederation debates in the old Canadian Parliament A.A. Dorion, a leader of the anti-Confederation forces, spoke for many in "Lower Canada" when he expressed the fear that Confederation might easily be a stepping stone to a legislative union, similar to the earlier union of the "two Canadas", in which French language and culture would be engulfed. Dorion found the assurances of George-Etienne Cartier unconvincing and became one of the first in a long line of francophone leaders to stress the importance of special guarantees for Quebec.

From the earliest days of the new nation, constitutional questions got close attention. The "Confederation Generation" was as preoccupied as we have been with the workings of the nation. Our search for identity began even before the new Dominion came to birth on 1 July 1867 and the characteristics of the Canadian nation were hotly debated throughout the early years.

Canadians had hardly begun to enjoy their new nationhood when vexing questions began to arise. First of all, there were the difficulties occasioned by the admission of new provinces. Representation by population was regarded as one of the great gains obtained at Confederation, but the achievement was short-lived. There was consternation when John A. Macdonald agreed to allow the two new Western provinces, Manitoba (1870) and British Columbia (1871), more seats in Parliament than their populations warranted. The six seats granted to British Columbia were described by the *Globe* as "those six wretched outrages on justice and decency" and it was widely felt that Macdonald was simply twisting the constitution in order to create "pocket boroughs" for his own use, a view that gained credence when Sir Francis Hincks was provided with a safe seat in British Columbia after losing an election in Eastern Canada. Over a century later many British Columbians would vote against the 1992 accord because they were concerned that it did not give the province as many seats as it deserved under the principles of "rep by pop". Much has been said about representation by population over the last century and some claimed that it had been obtained in the Charlottetown compromise, but the fact remains that "rep by pop" has been a myth in federal politics since the salad days of the young Dominion.

A leitmotiv throughout the first century or so of the nation's history has been the argument over the legal means of obtaining amendments to the constitution. As we know, the British North America Act, until its patriation in 1982, could only be amended by the British Parliament, acting upon a formal request from Canada.

Could the Canadian Parliament alone make the request for a constitutional amendment, or was it necessary to have the agreement of the provinces? This vexing question was briskly, sometimes loudly debated over the century after 1867.

As early as 1869 the Liberal Edward Blake argued that Confederation was, in effect, a treaty involving the various founding colonies and that provincial consent was required before a request could be made to the Imperial Parliament at Westminister. Others held the view that only a joint request by both Houses of Parliament, the Commons and the Senate, was required and that no consultation with the provinces was necessary.

The notion of provincial participation was attractive to those who felt that it would enhance the democratic

posture of the nation, but others pointed out that reliance upon provincial approval could lead to constitutional deadlock.

On numerous occasions during the nation's first half century or so the Dominion government approached Westminster with only an address from the two Houses of Parliament. This procedure was followed, for example, when the Manitoba Act of 1870 was confirmed by the Imperial Parliament in 1871.

Later it would be claimed that the intention of the Founding Fathers had always been to include provincial approval in any address to the British Parliament, but it seems clear that, while the importance of provincial approval was often discussed, it was never given official status. Indeed, there are indications that the first Macdonald government had assumed that a request by the government of the day would be sufficient. Other voices, however, insisted that such

Alexander Galt

requests should come from Parliament alone. Alexander Galt, one of the Fathers of Confederation, is on record as supporting this view:

> He [Galt] was not prepared to allow the government to exercise a power which should alone be exercised by Parliament; and he hoped the government would see the propriety of proceeding by way of address. The matter was one of great importance for the only security the provinces had was that their constitutional rights could not be changed by any government that might be in power, but by Parliament only. He thought that the government before taking the vote should consider whether it would not be better to decide that for all time to come no change should be made in the British North America Act except in the usual approved method of address to the Queen.

The view that Parliament is supreme and, in effect, speaks for the people and the regions of Canada seemed to many Victorians to be right and proper. After all, Parliament represented the entire nation and took a large, national view. Provinces were concerned with their immediate interests and were unlikely to consider only the good of the nation.

Nevertheless the view that approval by the provinces for important changes was essential continued to have its supporters. One was Sir George Ross who laid down a formula for constitutional amendment in his book *The Senate of Canada*, published in 1914. The Ross formula insisted that first the consent of all the provinces had to be obtained. Only then could there be a joint address by the Houses of Parliament to the Parliament of Great Britain. As the century wore on, this view prevailed, leading, again and again, to constitutional deadlock.

Through the 1920s and 1930s and on through the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s attempts to solve the constitutional riddle came to grief over an inability to reach agreement on the required weight of provincial approval. Should it be a simple majority of provinces or six provinces having 55 per cent of the population (including Ontario or Quebec) — or possibly seven provinces comprising at least 50 per cent of the population?

And so the years went by and the constitutional dilemma became a national obsession, leading to the disappointments of 1990 and 1992.

It might well be argued that if the theory that Parliament should be the sole voice of constitutional change had been acted upon early in our history, Canada might be a happier country today. If Parliament had retained

Macdonald's Parliament

responsibility for the country as a whole, leaving the provinces to deal solely with local issues, we might have been spared much. That particular road, however, was not taken — "and that", as the poet wrote, "has made all the difference."

Nevertheless and in spite of predictions of doom and disaster, the nation dreams its winter dreams. We have come too far to turn back and we have accomplished too much together to go our separate ways into the future. A way may yet be found through the woods; a mile or two ahead we may stumble on a path through the drifts. This nation was built on struggle and perseverance. Only the faint-hearted are willing to give up now. As the snow falls slowly over the winter land, the dream is born again.

— Christopher Dafoe

CANADA'S AMAZING SHOWMAN

By Shane Peacock

When the *New York Times* went to press on 11 August 1864 one of the articles was not complete, but it was published anyway, so compelling were its contents. It concerned the bizarre attempt of some decidedly strange person to walk along the brink of the American Falls at Niagara, using a pair of stilts. He had started out well and actually seemed on the verge of success when a mis-step did him in, or nearly did him in. You see, at press time, he was still out there, almost literally hanging on by his fingertips, desperately clinging to a little island on the very edge of a thundering 200-foot waterfall. And so the *Times* printed the story, saying he was hanging on . . . but they weren't really sure if he would still be there in the morning.

It was a heart-stopping moment for all who saw it, but just a slightly more than average adventure in the amazing life of G.A. Farini, a man who seemed to live the lives of 10 men and experienced things that would have been considered too far-fetched for many novels. And yet, he is almost totally forgotten today, as though popular history had written him off, just like many spectators did at Niagara so long ago as they watched him clinging to the edge of the falls.

He wasn't actually G.A. Farini at all. His name was William Leonard Hunt and he was born in Lockport, New York, on 10 June 1838. His parents were both Canadians: his mother being the daughter of a United Empire Loyalist and his father an English immigrant. They met near Port Hope, Ontario, and moved to Lockport for a brief stay in the mid-1830s so that Thomas Hunt, an enterprising merchant, could capitalize on the economic boom in the Erie Canal area. By 1843 they had moved back to southern Ontario and Willie was educated in the log school houses of Bowmanville and Hope Township.

From the time he was a small child his parents found him difficult to control, and, predictably, his greatest joy in life was watching the travelling circuses that appeared, like fantasies, in the backwoods villages. Upper Canadians lived isolated lives based on strict Protestant morals and many felt that these exhibitions of proud Yankee entertainment appealed to something evil in the human spirit. But little Willie Hunt, blind to such "immorality", was electrified from the moment the first circus came down the dirt road of Bowmanville with a brass band playing and painted wagons full of animals and strange-looking people.

He found ways to sneak into the shows, memorized the wonderful performances, and then practised them daily on homemade equipment he built in his father's barn. By the time he reached 16 he was an accomplished amateur performer, much to the chagrin of his serious-minded parents.

They tried apprenticing him to a doctor and for a while that seemed to work. But a few years later, when his father was away in England, an offer came to him that he could not refuse and his life changed forever.

The source of his opportunity was the small, financially troubled Durham County Agricultural Fair. It had recently lost government grants and feared that another year of boring speeches, farm exhibits, and apple pie contests would spell its death. Its directors, well aware that the greatest attraction in the country

that autumn of 1859 was a sensational high-wire act over the Niagara gorge by the French acrobat Blondin, had heard rumours that Tom Hunt's boy, though a doctor-in-waiting, could also do some extraordinary things on a rope he had strung from the ground to the top of his father's barn. They made an offer and young Hunt accepted, hesitating only to drive up his fee.

A career in the circus was certainly not what his family expected of him, and so, in order to protect their "good" name, he found a pseudonym for himself in the pages of the September 1859 newspapers, a name that appeared prominently for the two weeks preceding his debut, and then essentially disappeared. Signor Luigi Carlo Farini was a dashing figure in Italian wars and politics of the late 1850s: a dictator of the state of Modena, an ally of the world-renowned Garibaldi and eventually the premier of the young Italy. The name Farini suited the young ropewalker's other purposes: it was foreign, exotic-sounding, and much more certain to attract attention than plain Bill Hunt. Later in life he added Guillermo, for William, and Antonio, for effect.

The new Signor Farini made his debut on 1 October 1859 on a ragged homemade tightrope (made from the rigging of a cousin's schooner) that stretched four storeys above, and nearly 500 feet across rocky Smith's Creek (now the Ganaraska River) in the centre of the town of Port Hope. A large crowd came, numbering in the thousands, drawn by the rope-walking mania Blondin had created, the danger implicit in the feat, and newspaper reports telling them that Farini was a local man. He had even issued a challenge to the mighty Blondin that had been printed in several papers, including the *Toronto Globe:*

> TO M. BLONDIN! The undersigned challenges M. Blondin, as follows: — I will carry M. Blondin to the centre of his Cable across the Niagara River, he to carry me the rest of the distance across. Afterwards to start from either end, proceed to the centre, and down ropes to the deck of the *Maid of the Mist* below, returning the same way.
>
> I offer this challenge in consequence of M. Blondin's repeated assertions that no man dare perform his feats. SIGNOR FARINI.

As soon as people saw the rope it was evident to them that a fall would either cause his death or cripple him for life and many shouted up at him when he appeared on the roof of the Western Building, warning him not to try it. But he went out like a seasoned professional and walked steadily toward the rope's centre. Here the poor quality of his rope almost finished him: it gave a sudden jerk, but held, as Farini stopped dead in his tracks. He completed his crossing without further problems and on his way back walked without his balance pole, a daring move even for a

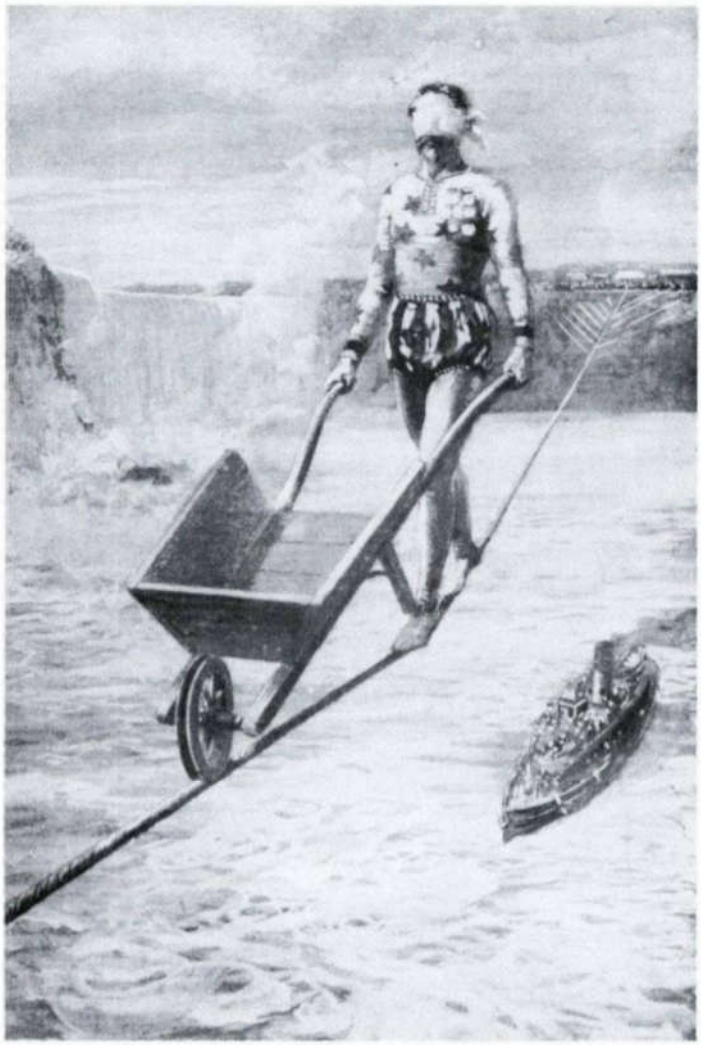
SIG. FARINI
THE INEXHAUSTIBLE!
FARINI THE COMICAL
SIGNOR FARINI WILL ON
ON WEDNESDAY,
SEPT. 5, 1860, AT 4 O'CLOCK, P. M.
AT
NIAGARA FALLS,
BIDDY O'FLAHERTY
THE IRISH WASHERWAOMN,
PATENT WASHING MACHINE!
Draw up Water from the River AND DO HIS OWN WASHING
FARINI'S CABLE IS WITHIN A FEW RODS OF THE FALLS
AND CLOSE TO THE FERRY.
TICKETS OF ADMISSION. - - - 25 CENTS.
Reserved Seats, Twenty-Five Cents Extra.
FRANK SOPER, Agent.

An element of farce was introduced into the serious business of daredevil walks when Farini appeared as "Biddy O'Flaherty, The Irish Washerwoman".

veteran. He jumped off the rope near the centre and caught it with one hand; he sat down on it; and in his *coup de grace* hung by his feet, his arms stretched down toward the water.

The reaction to this first performance was all that he could have asked for and more. The applause and shouting was long and loud, ringing up and down the street, and when he performed his strongman act (the second part of his contract) at Town Hall five days later, a huge crowd came to see him.

Enamoured of the strongmen he had seen in the circuses, he had been lifting weights since childhood, using pieces of his father's weigh scale. The show always began with a lecture about physical conditioning that displayed his knowledge in the medical field. Then he would put a huge stone on his chest and invite men out of the audience to crack it with sledgehammers. He played tug-of-war with 10 or more men (using an apparatus he had built which caused the men to actually pull against each other), and lifted various weights, including a one-handed lift of 150 pounds. A newspaper reported the following year that he had dead-lifted 1,000 pounds, making him temporarily one of the world's strongest men.



The great Blondin on his famous walk over Niagara. To display his perfect balance, Blondin wore a blindfold.

His second Port Hope performance occurred on 11 October and drew a crowd of 8,000, a gathering about twice the size of the town's population. He wanted to carry a man on his back this time, but was stopped at the roof's edge by the mayor. Farini then walked blindfolded, somersaulted on the rope and stood on his head, doing it all with such ease that the editor of the local paper was prompted to say that he looked as comfortable on the rope as most people did on the ground.

Despite the enormous success of his debut, Farini always claimed that he did not give up studying medicine, and passed the exams which made him a doctor within a few weeks of his first show business triumph. Whether or not this is true is still open to debate, but there is little doubt that he never practised medicine on a regular basis. Circumstances were about to change his life and sweep him away into a life far more exotic than a medical career.

The catalyst for change was the return of his father from his trip to England. Thomas Hunt, whose life was a never-ending search for respectability, was devastated by what his son had done and his anger and embarrassment spilled over into face-to-face condemnation that estranged father and son for many years. As a result Farini left home, abandoning medicine to seek his fortune in the show business world.

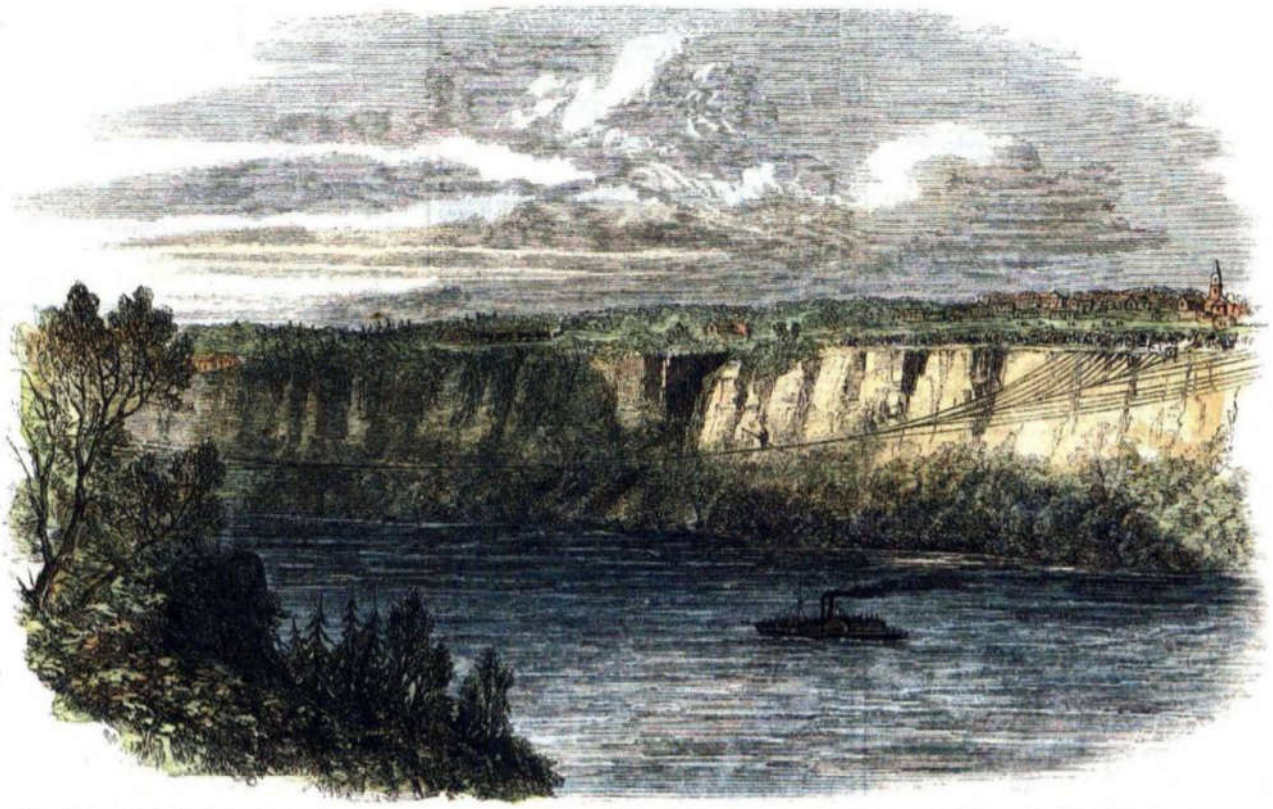
He then pursued a wandering life that began with high-wire performances at several fairs in southern Ontario late in the year and then, he claims, took him to live for a brief while with relatives on the American frontier in Minnesota. Soon he was moving again, latching on to a showboat, operated by the famous American circus clown and impresario Dan Rice, that made stops along the Mississippi River all the way from Illinois to New Orleans. He told friends that he worked as everything from an advance man to the featured wire walker, and experienced the rough and tumble Wild West at firsthand.

By the spring of 1860 he had made his way back to Canada and was again surviving as a travelling high-wire *artiste*. In July he performed in his boyhood town of Bowmanville, presenting both a high wire and strongman act. But ever since his debut in Port Hope his mind had been set on the world's greatest high wire; the one that the mighty Blondin used at Niagara Falls. The same month that the Signor appeared in Bowmanville, "the Magnificent" Blondin returned to his famous rope. Farini decided to make his move.

Mid-way through July he appeared at Niagara Falls and issued another public challenge to Blondin, which was met with disdain. The great acrobat had received many challenges during the past year but no one had been willing to actually put his life on the line. So this offer from Farini was to him just another publicity stunt from another pretender.

But by the end of July Blondin realized this man was unlike the others: he had secured the sponsorship of several hotels and had succeeded in the difficult task of raising his cable. His rope was an enormous 1,800 feet long, far longer than Blondin's, and strung several hundred yards closer to the falls than the first Niagara high wire. The Frenchman had moved over a mile downstream from his first site for his 1860 shows and was now walking a 1,000-foot rope over the whirlpool at Devil's Hole.

And so a 22-year-old novice who taught himself the high wire in his father's barn took on a 36-year-old veteran, a man who had walked professionally since he was a child and was considered one of the greatest acrobats of all time. Their first duel was set for 15 August and so great was the public's interest that a crowd of over 10,000 turned out. Many thought Farini would fall and that possibility proved a major drawing card, blunting a theory, popular around town, that this



FARINA, WITH A MAN ON His BACK, CROSSING THE NIAGARA ON A TIGHTROPE.—FROM A SKETCH TAKEN BY THE LATE MASTER H. INGRAM, FROM CLIFTON HOUSE BALCONY, AUGUST 29, 1860. SEE SUPPLEMENT, PAGE 220.

Artist H. Ingram captured the scene for "The Illustrated London News" as Farini (mistakenly called "Farina") crossed the Niagara with a man on his back. August 1860.

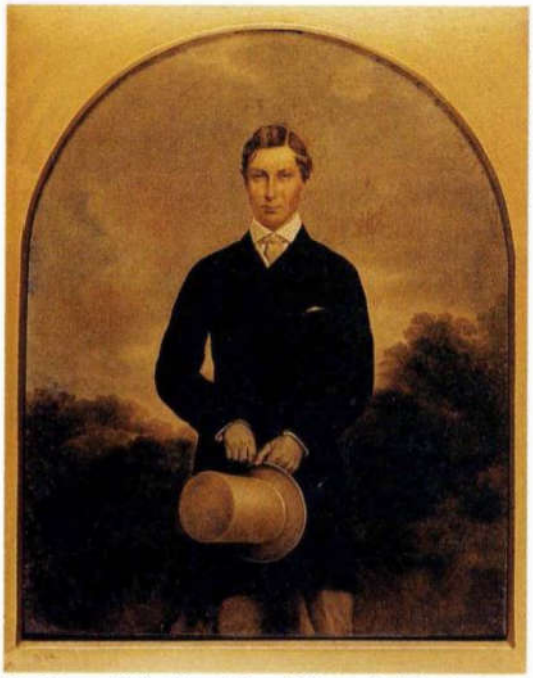
challenger was just a ruse used by the hotels to draw tourists. Rumours were rife that first week, and among the most discussed was a published report that Farini had beaten up Blondin when the two had met accidentally at a train station in Buffalo.

The belief that Farini was about to meet his death almost proved correct when he appeared extremely nervous at the beginning of his performance and then had to contend with the terrible fact that his balance pole was too long and kept getting entangled in his guy lines, almost pitching him into the gorge. But he kept his head and got over to the other side alive, even throwing in a headstand to spice things up. On his return trip he performed the arduous feat of descending feet-first (not head-first as advertised, a change in program for which he was heavily criticized) on a vertical rope to the *Maid of the Mist* and then returning back up to his high wire. This trick nearly finished him: he was exhausted beyond his expectations, and it took every ounce of his strength to resume the walk and get home safely.

Blondin was flawless. He took a stove out with him, cooked an omelette at mid-wire, and brought back part of his meal for spectators to try.

But Farini had actually out-drawn Blondin, a fact not missed by the papers when they declared the latter the better walker. It was also noticed that Farini's rope drooped, and swayed in the wind, making his feat far more perilous. It was being said that Blondin had told friends that he would never set a single foot on Farini's rope.

Two days later they were at it again: Farini dressed up in the costume of "Mickey Free, the Irish Pedestrian", a famous long distance walker of the time, and Blondin walking in wooden shoes. Farini took on the walker's persona because he had been criticized for being slow during his debut: this time he went over the rope in an incredible nine-minute trot. (A number of his acts that summer were parodies, poking fun at both the lofty Blondin and the seriousness with which many viewed the competition.) This performance also featured some of his gymnastic tricks, which he did smoothly, twisting around using rings while the crowd gasped; Blondin, on the other hand, actually had a few difficult moments when his smooth-bottomed shoes caused him to slip down the rope. He had to take them off in order to survive. Overall it was a successful outing for the challenger, one that enhanced his stature



National Archives of Canada

The Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, watched Blondin but snubbed Farini during his 1860 visit to the falls.

considerably.

He presented his strongman act at the Grant Theatre in Niagara Falls, New York, a few days later and then went back onto his rope on 22 August for the only show that did not feature a simultaneous walk by Blondin; but this time Farini's daring almost got the better of him.

One of Blondin's great feats was to walk the high wire enclosed in a sack — feet excepted, of course, to allow him to move. Farini thought he should go one better: he would put his entire body in the sack, feet included. He liked to say that the danger others saw in his feats was not nearly as great as supposed, because everything was carefully planned and all problems considered. But the first few moments of the sack walk put the lie to such confidence, and it was abundantly clear almost from the moment he started out that he really didn't know if this feat was possible. As soon as he stepped on the cable he started slipping down the incline: he was blindfolded and nearly out of control, on the verge of a 200-foot fall that would plunge him deep beneath the Niagara's current, wrapped in his own sack-coffin, like a sailor's corpse buried at sea. Using all his powers he brought himself to a dead halt, and then slowly inched his way back up the incline to the platform. Once there his assistants unbagged him; he put on his rubber shoes on the outside of the bag and started out again, this time with more success. A short distance out he stood on his head and it was said that, with the cambric material flowing in the wind, he looked like a human sail, spread to the Niagara's winds. On the way home he walked backwards as promised.

On 29 August the two men put on their ultimate duel: each walking the high wire with a man strapped to his back. Blondin, a small but muscular man, carried his little manager Harry Colcord, who likely weighed less than 140 pounds; while Farini (powerfully built and much bigger than Blondin) made his attempt with an old friend from Port Hope (advertised as a stranger) named Rowland McMullen, who was considerably heavier than Colcord and so tall that spectators took to calling him "Daddy Long Legs". Blondin, now doing this trick for the second time, sailed through his performance without even the hint of incident. Farini, who had advertised that he would unload at mid-wire, cross beneath his quivering partner, and then re-load for the return trip, had a much more difficult crossing. When he was only a few steps from the shore the spectators could see that his legs shook, nearly buckling from the strain of balancing such a large weight on the cable. Soon he had to stop and let McMullen down, getting him to hold onto his shoulders as they walked together. They had to do this several times, both on the way to the centre and on the way back. He was criticized by some, but because it was such a brave attempt and so fraught with peril, it offered greater thrills to its spectators and gained more attention in the press.

That was the zenith of their competition, though there were several other performances, including a presentation for the Prince of Wales (HRH viewed Blondin's walk, but apparently snubbed Farini). In September Farini walked in the character of "Biddy O'Flaherty, the Irish Washerwoman" and carried a 100-pound washing machine out to the centre where he lowered a pail to the water, washed several lady's handkerchiefs, hung them out to dry, and offered people the chance to come out and see if they were done. He also walked pantomiming a horse, leapt from his cable into the water and crossed at night in the glow of roman candles, which went out and left him to finish in darkness.

He took down his rope in October and moved on to performances in the United States, proud of what he had accomplished. Blondin reigned as the superior *artiste*, but for daring, imagination and showmanship, Farini had been hard to beat, and those who were there that summer likely never forgot him.

After travelling in the States for the winter months, possibly spending a short stretch in New Orleans, he came back to Niagara Falls for a second season. But things had changed: Blondin had gone to England, the Civil War had diminished crowds, and difficulties at the falls, including problems with steamers, made it tough for him to make his walks profitable, something he always insisted on. So he put on several exhibitions

Mrs. G. Marsh, East Durham Historical Society, Port Hope

Left to right: Lulu, Signor Farini and an unidentified performer, possibly one of the Zazels, photographed in London, England, mid-1870s.

Signor Farini, aged 22, at Niagara Falls, 5 September 1860. Farini, in the character of the Irish washerwoman, has a washing machine on his back.

near Buffalo, defeating the acclaimed Monsieur DeLave (who had challenged Blondin several times but never followed through) in a series of high-wire contests.

It seems that he married some time in 1861 and then joined the Union Army as a member of the Engineers Regiment. He claimed to have done some spying behind enemy lines for the North, said he was once wounded, and attained the rank of captain; but his proudest contributions were a couple of bizarre inventions, one of which apparently brought him into contact with Abraham Lincoln. He put together a huge rope bridge that could easily be carried and deployed, geting troops across rivers quickly; and he thought up a strange pair of pontoon-like shoes that enabled men to walk on water. An exhibition of the latter is said by him to have elicited the following comment from the president: "Young man, don't be afraid, for if you should tip over and get in head down, I'm tall enough to wade you out."

Either because he had resigned from the army or because he was on leave, he turned up in Havana, Cuba, in December of 1861 walking over a bull ring with his wife strapped to his back. Near the conclusion of the performance she reached up to wave to the crowd, lost her balance, and fell from his shoulders. He tried to save her by allowing himself to go with her, wrapping a leg around the rope and reaching out to clutch her by the dress. But the material was too light, it tore from his hands and she fell, head-first into the seats below. Within days she was dead.

Perhaps to work off his grief he started touring extensively, probably going to South America, usually working alone, but sometimes, he claimed, fronting a small circus. He appeared in New York City in 1864 as the "Athlete of the World" in an act that exploited both his acrobatic and strength skills. Not long after this, newspapers were reporting that he was billing himself as a "pangymnastikonaerostationist". Such was his clever, comic mind.

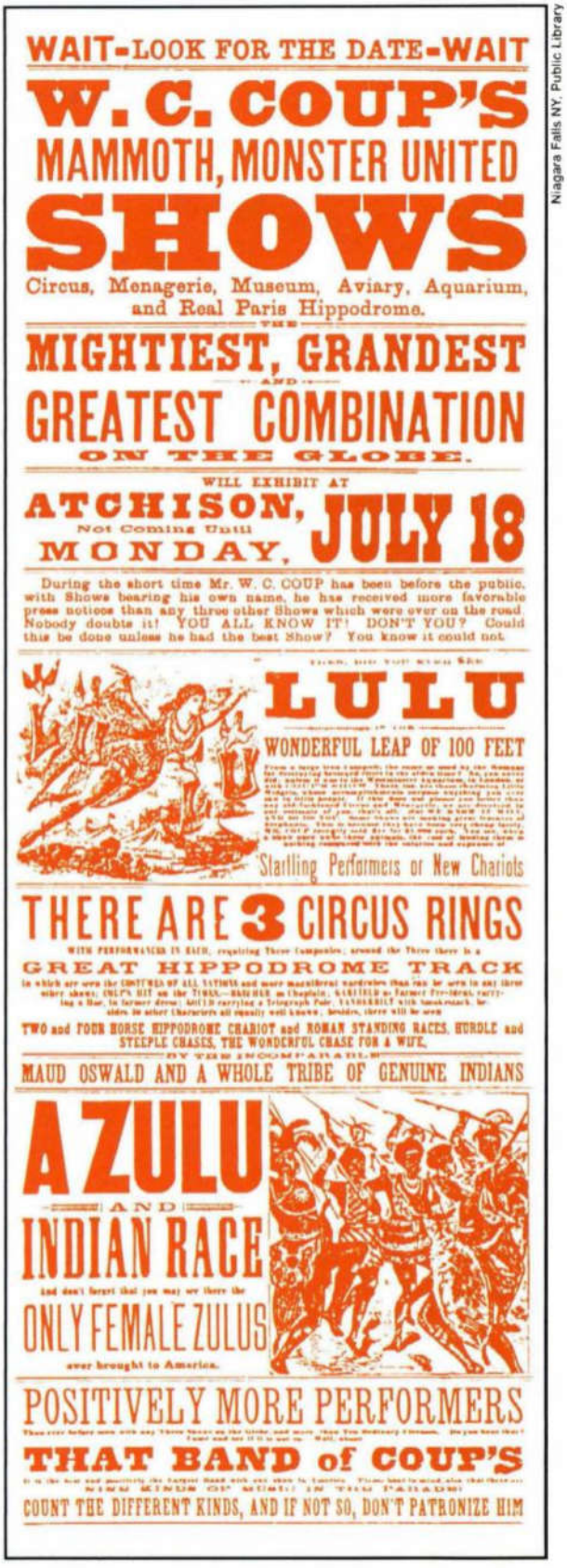
In August of 1864 Niagara Falls was the setting for a feat stranger than anything he had tried before. In front of an early morning crowd (which may or may not have been witnessing a practice run) he tried to walk across the very brink of the American Falls on stilts. Egged on by several loud-mouthed young men, he moved closer to the edge until suddenly he wasn't able to budge: one stilt was jammed into the rocks. He pulled several times without being able to free it, and then with one unbalanced heave yanked it out, but sent himself reeling down into the rapids. Spectators screamed as he was swept toward the edge; but then, somehow, he was able to reach out and catch the branch of a tree on a tiny island near the edge. Battered and bruised, he pulled himself to safety and then sat there, for at least the next 24 hours, prompting the press to report his predicament without knowing its conclusion. Finally his brother Tom got a rope to him and he was pulled ashore. It was never known how much of this adventure was just a high-voltage publicity stunt.

In September he walked over Chaudiere Falls in Ottawa near the spot where the Parliament buildings were being erected and a little later he is said to have married again, to a Nova Scotian millionairess who was smitten by his dark good looks and blue eyes when she saw him perform in Halifax. This is a rather mysterious marriage and if it indeed did occur then this lady had somehow left the scene by 1871 when he married an English woman named Alice Carpenter, who would be the mother of his two sons.

In 1866 the "Flying Farinis" took the Cremorne Gardens and the Alhambra Palace in London, England, by storm, presenting the Signor and his adopted son "el Niño" in a trapeze act. It featured the little one as a lightning-fast flyer who played a drum while he was held aloft by the nape of the neck; he then swept down from the perch to bounce off his father's iron-like abdominals, before ending the show with his song, "Wait Til I'm a Man".

The act did well over the next few years, playing throughout England and on the continent. El Niño, whom Farini apparently had found as an orphan on the streets in the United States, kept improving with Farini's expert training (he would one day be called one of the world's greatest trainers of acrobats). Two aspects of their success gave birth to a wonderful idea. The first was the possibilities involved in propelling acrobats through the air and the second was the way in which people responded to the beauty of his young protégé.

One of the biggest circus stars of the 1870s and 1880s was "Mademoiselle Lulu", a beautiful young female acrobat of unknown origins who seems to have made her debut in Paris in 1870. She could walk the tightrope, swing on the trapeze as well as any man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WONDERFUL LEAP OF 100 FEET
Startling Performers or New Chariots
THERE ARE 3 CIRCUS RINGS
GREAT HIPPODROME TRACK
TWO and FOUR HORSE HIPPODROME CHARIOT and ROMAN STANDING RACES, HURDLE and STEEPLE CHASES, THE WONDERFUL CHASE FOR A WIFE,
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MAUD OSWALD AND A WHOLE TRIBE OF GENUINE INDIANS
A ZULU
AND
INDIAN RACE
ONLY FEMALE ZULUS
ever brought to America.
POSITIVELY MORE PERFORMERS
THAT BAND of COUP'S
COUNT THE DIFFERENT KINDS, AND IF NOT SO, DON'T PATRONIZE HIM
Niagara Falls NY. Public Library

Farini's protegé, Lulu, London, early 1870s. Many of those who saw Lulu perform suspected that "she" was actually a man.

(and is credited with the first ever triple somersault into the net), and, in her most startling act, jump 25 feet straight up from the solid boards of any stage-floor. In 1871 she ascended to stardom in England, drawing such notice at the theatres that her act was called "the principal sensational performance in London". Merchandise with Lulu's name on it was soon in demand and men of both low and high standing sought out her affections and even offered marriage. But an air of mystery always surrounded the shy, stay-at-home star, and soon rumours (some said to be fuelled by Blondin) circulated that Lulu was actually a man. G.A. Farini, who had created the act and managed it, and had invented the catapult hidden in the stage floor-boards that projected his apprentice up to the trapeze, denied all accusations, but sometimes seemed to encourage the speculation.

Lulu's success continued throughout the 1870s, taking her back to the United States for several runs, including popular appearances at Niblo's Garden in New York City. But late in the decade the rumours about her sex had increased and some time after an accident in Ireland in 1876 (where she was examined by a doctor), Farini admitted to the deception: Lulu was his adopted son, El Niño.

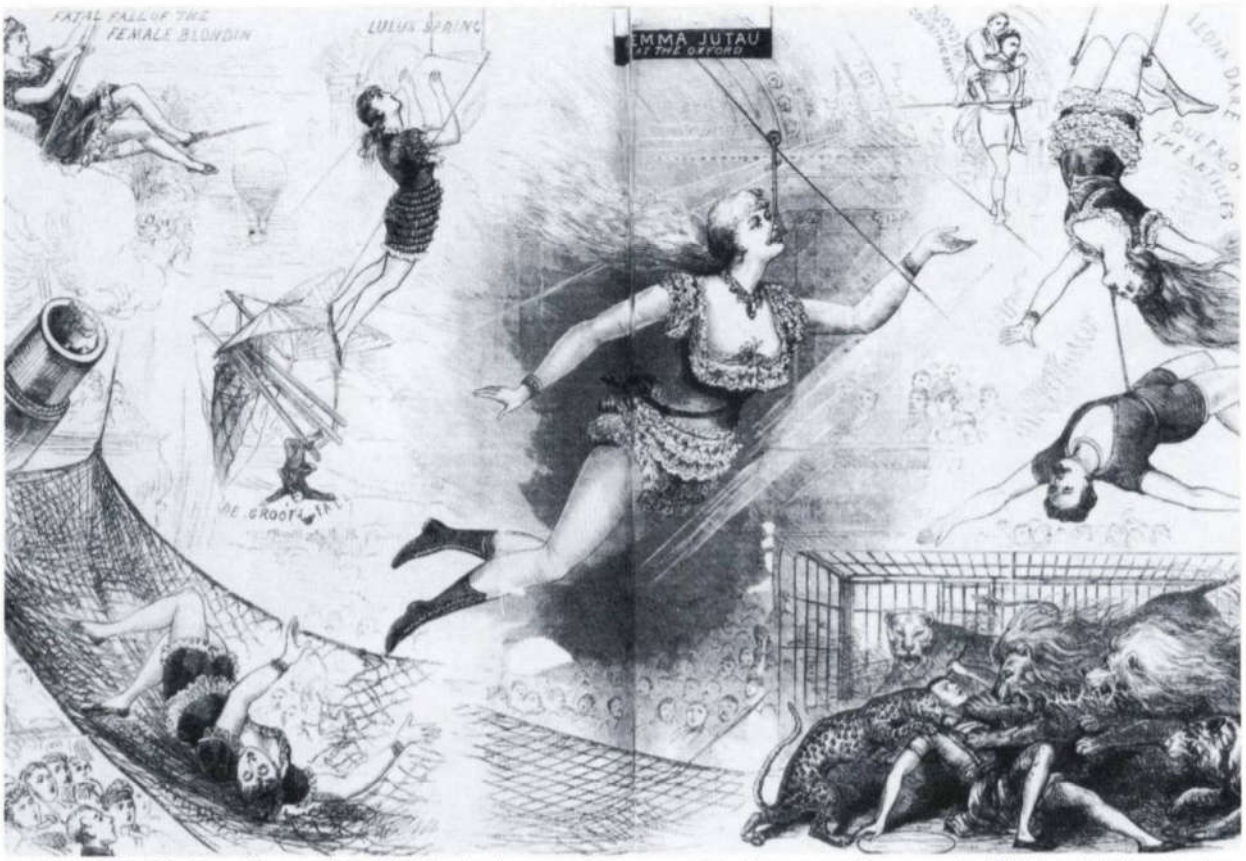
So wonderful were Lulu's performances that "her" unveiling didn't seem to hurt her appeal and "he" continued to appear on many major shows until the late 1880s, sometimes dressed in women's clothes. He got top-billing and a large salary with W.C. Coup's big circus at Madison Square Garden and was later with P.T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth.

Farini's reputation as an impresario began growing with the success of Lulu and in 1877 when the Royal Westminster Aquarium got into financial difficulties its respectable owners knew whom to seek out to turn things around. "The Aq" had opened the previous year, just a stone's throw from Westminster Abbey and the Parliament buildings, intended to be a cultural centre for high-minded entertainment. Farini's reign there over the ensuing decade represented its heyday and the entertainment was certainly high, if not high-minded, and definitely explosive. In fact, he opened with a bang.

In April 1877 huge crowds came to the Aquarium to see the beautiful "Zazel" fired out of the mouth of a cannon, all the way across the cavernous hall into a net. At the time many thought this sensational performance, which took London by storm and scandalized many respectable citizens, was the world's first human cannonball act. Actually the Yankee Robinson Circus had presented it in the United States two years earlier, though the act, because it did not last long, may have had some problems. It should be noted that Farini patented the act the same year that Robinson presented it and the moment of its ascendancy in the circus world began at the Aquarium.

Zazel quickly became a star. She went across the Atlantic in the early 1880s appearing twice in Barnum's show and headlining in others. She was the subject of a burlesque that ran for 151 performances at the Gaiety Theatre in London, wherein an evil Farini-like Mephistopheles fires the heroine out of a cannon (perhaps giving rise to the rumour that Farini was the model for George du Maurier's *Svengali*). Zazel was celebrated in a popular song by George Leybourne, married Barnum executive George Starr and was said to have been the subject for W. Somerset Maugham's short story, *Gigolo and Gigolette*.

The Svengali persona fits perfectly with Farini's reputation during the 1880s: he was considered brilliant, mysterious and manipulative, a dark power behind many of the strange and dangerous acts that played London. It was rumoured that there were actually many Zazels, and Farini could summon



In March 1880 "The Penny Illustrated Paper" of London drew attention to some of the dangerous performances that MP Edward Jenkins hoped to have banned. Acts using mechanical propulsion and those under the management of G.A. Farini were singled out for suppression.

another if one refused to enter the cannon's mouth. Among the other things he presented at the Aquarium: a hypnotized horse, a snake charmer, a sword swallower, Samson the strongman, the Man with the Iron Skull, Zaeo, a 100-foot dive, a talking walrus, a live whale (which died), a boxing kangaroo, broncho horses, Laplanders, Zulu tribesmen, African pygmies, and his famous freak, Krao the Missing Link.

In 1878 he was separated from his wife and two years later divorced in legal proceedings that were reported prominently in the press.

Public concern about dangerous performances, especially by children, grew in the late 1870s and by the end of the decade the British parliament had passed a law prohibiting children under 14 from participating in death-defying public amusements. In 1880 a bill was proposed that took the issue a step further, trying to ban all performances that endangered life and limb and obviously targeting the mysterious Farini by including language about acts that had "mechanical projecting power". This bill never got beyond the preliminary stages, but the Aquarium managers, who had never had a serious accident, were concerned about the "respectable" people behind such proposals and eventually banned all controversial acts. Farini then went to the United States for a while, sold the rights for his acts to big shows like Barnum and W.C. Coup, and became more of a freaks and curiosities showman. An advertisement in the *NY Clipper* that year noted his sale of such acts as Bebe the Flying Woman, the Zulus, Zeo and the Elastic Skin Man, as well as Lulu and Zazel.

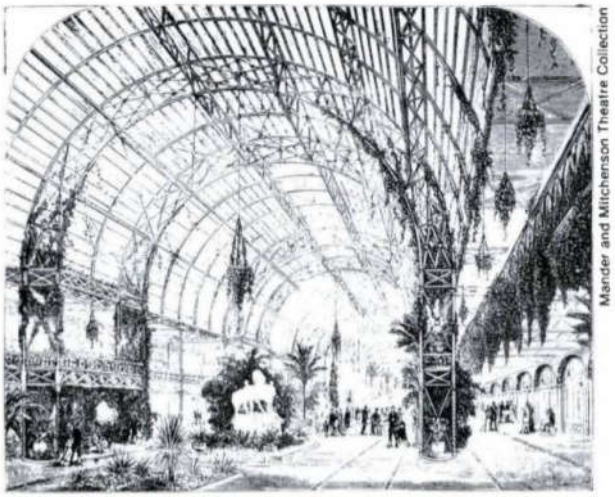
P.T. Barnum appears to have become a big fan by 1882 because that year his show was dominated by Farini acts. It featured "Zazel, the Woman Cannonball" on the high wire, in a "headlong Straight Down Dive" from the top of the pavilion, and in the inevitable cannon feat. Then there was "Lulu, the Incomparable" in the leap from the ground to the top of the canvas, in a trapeze act, and a catapult act where he was thrown 200 feet through the air, somersaulting as he flew. There was also "Zeo, the Supreme Sensation Queen" who slid down a rope by the hair on her head, "Farini's Zulus" and a Roman Hippodrome which appears to have had some Farini connection. And lastly G.A. Farini himself was listed as a "ring lecturer".

During his short career as a promoter of freaks he was involved with several famous acts, including

With his own career as a performer behind him, Farini began to manage circus performers and "freaks". One of his most popular acts was that of "Captain Costentenus, the world's most tattooed man".

Captain Costentenus, "the world's most tattooed man," but scored his biggest hit with Krao the Missing Link, a girl whom he first exhibited at the Aquarium in 1882. She was said to have been found in the jungles of Laos by an explorer in the pay of Farini and was advertised as having prehensile feet, pouches, hair over much of her body and other simian characteristics. He wrote a short book about her, claiming, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that she was the missing link in Darwin's theory, a proposal that brought the ire of many scientists but sent spectators flocking to his exhibition. Farini presented her to royalty and must have treated her well because it was evident later in life that she was well-educated, particularly adroit with languages, and showed herself in the sideshows as a distinguished lady. By that time she was independent, signing contracts with the John B. Doris and Ringling Brothers shows in the United States. She appears to have prospered in life and called herself Farini right up until her death.

By 1884 Farini had presented several African exhibitions and decided to forge further into that territory by sending his assistant W.A. Healey to southern Africa to entice several Bushmen and Zulus to come back to



Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection

The central hall of the Royal Westminster Aquarium, London, where many Farini acts performed.

England. His fascination with the area grew and in the following year he decided to go there himself, for reasons that have been much speculated upon: either to explore the Kalahari Desert, to search for diamonds, or to bring back more exhibits. Taking Lulu (who had married Farini's younger sister Edith Hunt and was about to retire and open a photography studio in Bridgeport, Connecticut) with him, he set off for Cape Town in South Africa in January and returned to England in August. During those months they travelled, mostly by horse and wagon, north through the Kalahari to Lake N'Gami in present day Botswana, protected only by their sidearms and the knowledge of their guides. When he arrived back in London he had several more natives, flora which he donated to the Royal Botannical Gardens and the material for an adventure story.

In 1886 he published *Through the Kalahari Desert*, with drawings from Lulu's photographs, and read selections before the Royal Geographical Society in London and the Berlin Geographical Society. The book was reviewed and excerpted in *The Graphic* and the *New York Tribune* and was translated into French and German. A good deal of controversy was aroused by his assertion that somewhere deep in the Kalahari he had seen the ruins of what he surmised was an ancient civilization. Many doubted this claim (and several other things he wrote about his trip) and debate concerning it still goes on in southern Africa. In fact numerous expeditions have been sent out, right up to the present day, in search of Farini's elusive lost city. So much has been written about this "discovery" that it has become a kind of legend and there is an extensive entry in the South African encyclopaedia concerning his life.

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LULU
PRESENT
THE HUMAN METEOR
HURLED FROM THAT TREMENDOUS ENGINE OF ANCIENT ROME, THE CATAPULT, 200 FEET THROUGH SPACE.
A TERRIFIC MID-AIR FEAT, ORIGINAL WITH THIS MARVELOUS ARTIST & PERFORMED BY HIM ALONE.
PAST

After it was revealed that Lulu was actually a man, "The Human Meteor" grew a moustache and continued to perform throughout the 1880s.

In January of 1886 the 47-year-old Farini married Anna Muller, an aristocratic German lady 15 years his junior. She was the daughter of the Kaiser's *aide-de-camp*, a relative of Richard Wagner and may have been a student of Franz Liszt. By the time she married Farini she had already gained modest fame as a concert pianist.

In the late 1880s he became a full partner in the Richard Wagner show business agency, perhaps England's biggest, counting among their clients Lily Langtry, Eugene Sandow, Fred Karnow and Vesta Tilley. Farini promoted a parachute jump at the Alexandra Palace in 1888 in which Professor Baldwin leapt from a hot-air balloon high above 60,000 people (including the Prince and Princess of Wales) and descended to earth in a crude parachute. Again Farini was embroiled in controversy as authorities attempted to prevent what they considered to be a highly dangerous act.

Signor and Madame Farini took up residence in the upper class neighbourhood of Forest Hill south of London around 1890 and, in semi-retirement, he devoted much of his time to horticulture, planting about 60,000 flowers one year and writing a book entitled *How to Grow Begonias*. It sold well and he was later made a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society.

An intelligent man of nearly ceaseless curiosity, he turned during this period to the art of invention, a hobby for many years previous. Eventually he patented a great number of things, including a method for increasing power in steam engines, a system for boxing bottles, improvements for gun cartridges, a new telegraph apparatus, an efficient watering can and the folding theatre chair, something well-known to twentieth-century movie-goers.

In 1894 he organized a "Fete of the Season", a huge charity fund-raiser that was patronized by the Prince and Princess of Wales and many of England's biggest

stars, its size and success a measuring stick of the kind of power he then wielded in the show business world.

The Farinis left England permanently some time around 1899 and settled, for a decade, in Toronto. Here he pursued several occupations from mining engineer, to whip company manager, to large stock holder in various companies; but his passion had become painting.

He began studying art with F. McGillivray Knowles in Toronto around the turn of the century and within a short time was exhibiting in that city, sometimes alongside future Canadian masters such as G.A. Reid, C.W. Jefferys and J.E.H. MacDonald. He was able to make some money from his efforts and achieved an unremarkable but steady competence.

About this time he became involved in the creation of what was thought to be an unsinkable boat. This unique vessel, known as Knapp's Roller Boat, was a huge steel cylindrical structure, with an outer shell that moved with the waves and an inner portion that remained stationary. The idea was that passengers would never be seasick and never notice the waves; and powered by four steam engines, it would be singularly fast. He sank $125,000 in the boat, which regrettably soon sank itself.

From 1910 to 1920 the Farinis lived in Germany where he continued to study art and wrote a 30-volume history of World War I (unpublished) from the German perspective. Although they were not interned, they had to report to authorities on a regular basis. During his stay he offered one of his sculptures to Prime Minister Robert Borden, to be part of the Canadian exhibition at the San Francisco World's Fair.

When the war ended he was 82 years old and without a home. He and Anna returned to the Port Hope area to live out the rest of their lives, eventually buying two homes in town because he had disposed of much of the 700 acres he had acquired in the country over the years. He continued to dabble in the stock market and painted every day, filling out a schedule that included robust exercise, seven-mile trips on his bicycle to help relatives work on their farms and the occasional interview with local papers. In 1923 he won an award at the Canadian National Exhibition for his painting "Waiting in the Harem". His home was jammed with mementos of his earlier days: African and circus things, German china, paintings and sculptures. Visitors heard stories that were often difficult to believe.

He died quite suddenly, in his 91st year, on 17 January 1929, succumbing after a short bout of the flu. His obituary appeared in a number of papers including the *New York Times*, but the many inaccuracies showed that he was long-forgotten. He was survived by one son, William Leonard (his other son died in 1893), and by Anna, who died in 1931.

He spoke seven languages, wrote at least four books and visited most countries in the world at a time well before air travel. Studies of his life turn up other surprises, not entirely substantiated, like a claim that he was instrumental in the invention of the parachute or that he perfected the magician's trick of levitation. But adding to the legend seems unnecessary.

One wonders what he could have been thinking on that terrifying day when he sat on that clump of earth on the brink of Niagara Falls, watching the water plunge over the edge. He was probably planning his escape: there were still so many things to do. ♦

Shane Peacock is a Toronto feelance writer.

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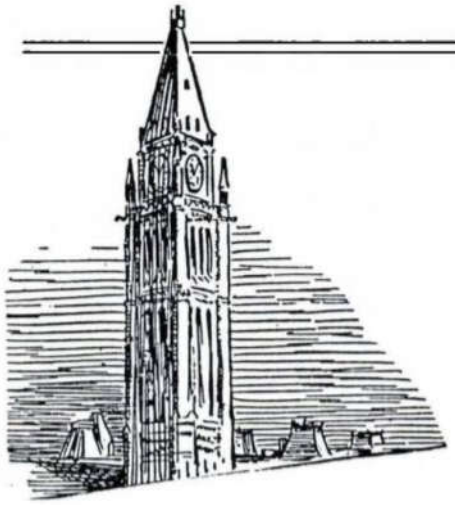


Grant Dexter on Parliament Hill

A Gentleman of the Fourth Estate

By Allan Levine

Noon, Friday, 14 October 1932. Grant Dexter, as was his usual custom, was lunching at the Rideau Club, home to Ottawa's Establishment. In the washroom, he was chatting with lawyer Ken Green about the recent Imperial Economic Conference and the Conservative government's tariff proposals, when the toilet flushed in one of the lavatory compartments and out stepped the Prime Minister of Canada, R.B. Bennett.

"Well, Dexter, what falsehoods have you been disseminating today?" asked Bennett, while washing his hands.

"None that I am aware of Mr. Bennett," an embarrassed Dexter replied.

"Doubltless you have written only your usual quota of mis-statements," the PM continued.

Dexter moved toward the door, trying to escape, but Bennett refused to stop the strained conversation.

"Why, Dexter, did you write so many falsehoods during the conference?" the Prime Minister asked shaking his finger as if he was scolding a child.

"I am not aware that I wrote any."

"Oh yes you are. You can't tell me that you were not actuated by malice."

"On the contrary, Mr. Bennett, I had the very best of reasons for believing that everything that I wrote on the conference was true."

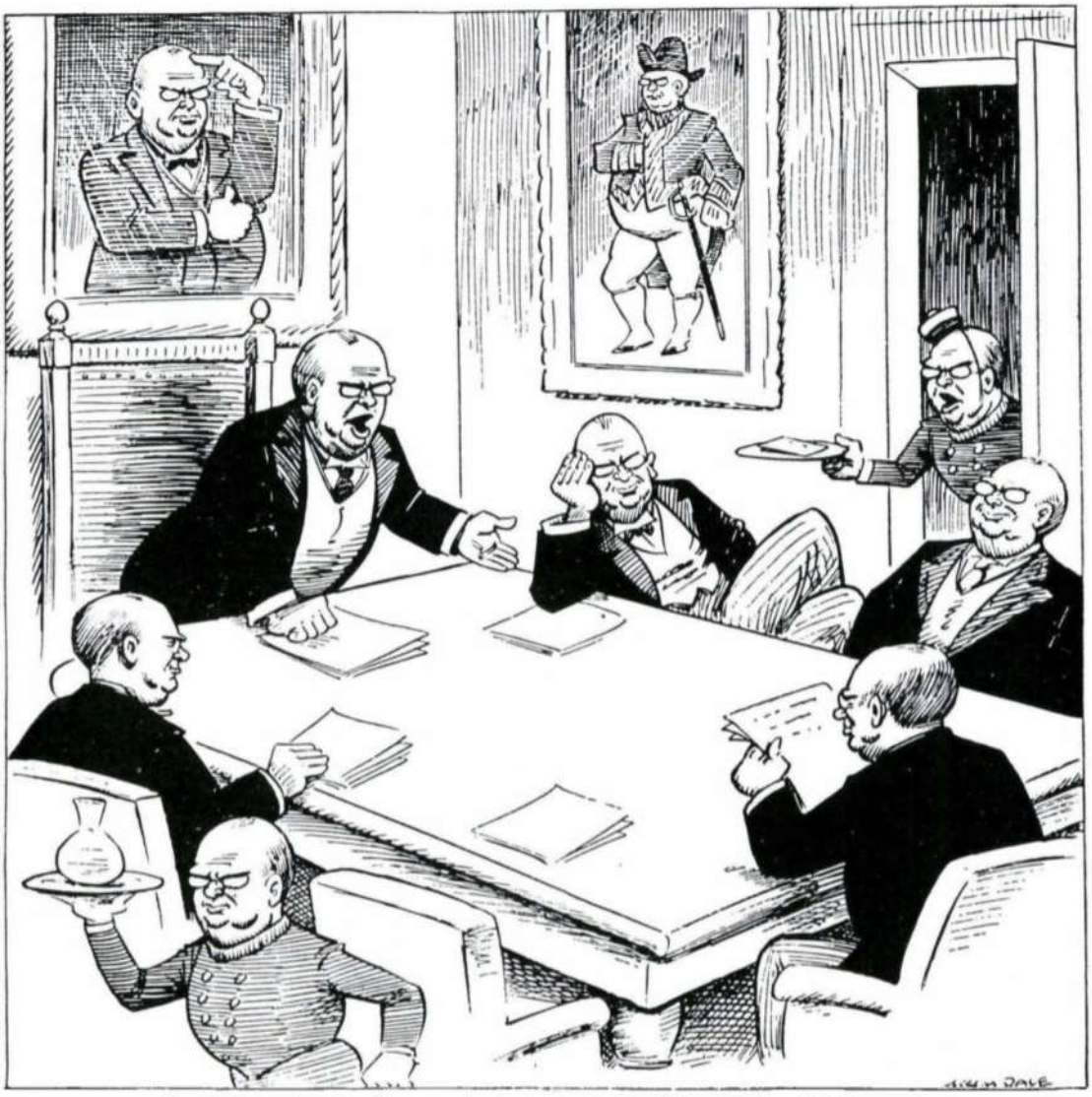
"You had not."

At about this moment, in walked former Prime Minister Arthur Meighen who, seeing the uncomfortable predicament Dexter was in, "smiled broadly behind R.B.'s back and went along." With the interrogation over, Dexter flew out of the washroom and sought refuge in a secluded corner of the club's dining room to eat his lunch. As he began to read the menu, Bennett appeared in front of the table and was invited to sit down.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* correspondent ordered soup; the prime minister, oysters. Again, Bennett started in on Dexter's coverage of the Imperial Conference. And again Dexter declared his innocence, pointing out that he relied on his own sources because Bennett was not available for him. After attempting to pry the name of these sources from Dexter, an exercise in futility, he pointed out how the *Free Press* and *Toronto Star* had nearly "wrecked" the conference. "One of the saddest consequences of this conference for me," Bennett added, "is that throughout the entire proceedings some Canadian journalists — [the *Free Press*'s esteemed editor John] Dafoe at Winnipeg was one of them — and you, young man [Dexter was 36 years old] were another, did everything in their power, stopped at nothing, to discredit your country's representatives, and your own Prime Minister. Is that fair journalism, is it common decency?"

Dumbfounded by Bennett's lack of understanding of journalistic work, Dexter reiterated that he was not guilty of "malignant distortion". Bennett concluded that he was therefore, "abysmally ignorant of what took place." As Dexter's face reddened, Bennett outlined his version of the conference's events. At the end of this lengthy and self-serving diatribe — that described in great detail Bennett's Herculean efforts — it was agreed that Bennett would become, to use post-Watergate terminology, Dexter's "Deep Throat", supplying the correspondent with background information and confirmation of confidential details.

Back in Winnipeg, John Dafoe was "astonished" by the interview. He encouraged Dexter to maintain close contact with Bennett on the condition that it was both the *Free Press*'s "right and duty to oppose him to the extent of our ability and this we propose to do until he and his policies are eliminated from our politics." Given this hard-line position, along with Bennett's huge ego and a deteriorating economy in 1933, Dexter did not become the Prime Minister's close confidant. Instead, the *Free Press* continued to demand a change of government. This led to numerous confrontations, including one in November 1933 when Bennett publicly declared that the Winnipeg paper, the *Financial*



The "Winnipeg Free Press" was unrelenting in its criticism of Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, as in this Arch Dale cartoon captioned "My Government".

Post and Grant Dexter were conspiring against him.

Earlier, Bennett was in Washington for a meeting on disarmament and decided to hold a briefing for the press at the Canadian Legation on Massachusetts Avenue. Dexter, who was covering the meeting, arrived with fellow-journalist Grattan O'Leary of the *Ottawa Journal*. "In one of the large reception rooms R.B. was surrounded by a crowd of American and Canadian reporters," remembered O'Leary. "As soon as R.B. spotted Dexter he drew himself up as though confronted by a striking adder. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he pontificated, 'there will be no press conference. I refuse to say anything in the presence of Mr. Dexter, the emissary of John W. Dafoe of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, whose only purpose here is to distort and misrepresent Canada's position'.' The stunned newsmen filed out of the room in disbelief.

R.B. Bennett's treatment of Grant Dexter was evidence of the contempt the Prime Minister held for the press in general, and for the *Winnipeg Free Press* in particular. But it also indicated the extraordinary power Dexter wielded as the *Free Press* Ottawa correspondent.

For at least twenty years, no journalist knew more about what was going on in Ottawa than Grant Dexter. No one had sources that reached as deep inside the cabinet or had as much access to prime ministers. He may not have been as elegant a writer as Bruce Hutchison or as electric as Grattan O'Leary, but he was the premier investigative reporter of his day writing for the premier newspaper of the day, John Dafoe's

Free Press. This last fact alone opened doors for Dexter closed to most other gallery journalists. For as soon as he arrived in Ottawa in 1923 at the age of 27, this tall unassuming farm boy of Scottish stock from Parkdale, Manitoba, became Dafoe's "eyes and ears". The correspondence between the two men was "a pile of papers three feet thick", as Bruce Hutchison ("Brucie" to Dexter) noted at the time of his friend's death in 1961.

And what correspondence! Besides submitting hundreds upon hundreds of news stories and commentaries to the "Chief"— as Dafoe was affectionately and reverently called — Dexter also dispatched to Winnipeg neatly-typed secret memoranda outlining in great detail the private thoughts of the country's political leaders. The breadth of his reports was remarkable: a private interview with Mackenzie King about his troubles with Governor General Lord Byng in 1926; being briefed in the months leading up to World War II on the latest cabinet strategy by Liberal ministers while playing a round of golf — a game Dexter never loved or was good at but endured as any dedicated newsman would; or having a heart-to-heart talk with R.B. Bennett in the men's washroom at the Rideau Club.

"The secret memos," as Dexter once explained to George Ferguson, the *Free Press*'s Managing Editor (later Editor of the *Montreal Star*), "really developed as a means of communication between various people here and the Chief. These people were mostly ministers and they did not want to write directly, but they wanted him to know certain things." Had Dexter desired, he could have written the most sensational political bestseller of his day. But because he believed that much of what he was told in these "off-the-record" conversations was intended for Dafoe's eyes and ears only, he never gossiped and was extremely protective of his sources and memoranda (the only ones to read them, outside of his wife Alice who typed many of them, were Dafoe and Ferguson, and later after Dafoe died in 1944, *Free Press* publisher Victor Sifton and Bruce Hutchison who joined the paper in 1944 as an associate editor).

The fact that he could be trusted endeared him to Liberals, Conservatives, and the growing civil service. During his two years as a *Free Press* correspondent in London from 1936 to 1938, Dexter befriended a member of the staff at the Canadian High Commission office, Lester "Mike" Pearson, who proved to be a valuable source of confidential information then and for years to come. Pearson's close contacts with Dexter nearly got him into trouble early in his career. Pearson briefed Dexter daily on events surrounding the Munich crisis of 1938. Dexter in turn relayed the information to George Ferguson in Winnipeg as well as to James Bone, the London Editor of the *Manchester Guardian*.

Dafoe family collection

J.W. Dafoe and his wife Alice with Grant Dexter on a visit to Dafoe's birthplace near Combermere, Ontario, in the 1930s.

Such indiscretion was risky. "Mike has felt a little nervous now and then, for fear Ottawa would notice the similarity between our cables and their information," Dexter wrote in September 1938. "But I think the facts were sufficiently changed and much has gone confidentially . . . Mike is taking his life in his hands talking out of turn. You can imagine what [Mackenzie] King would do to him. And Mike is a bad devil when he wants to be."

Back in Canada, Dexter and his family became part of the Ottawa Establishment. They lived in a nice house in exclusive Rockcliffe, belonged to the right clubs and knew just about anybody of any importance. Like the politicans he covered, however, this journalist eventually grew a little remote from the real world. Historian James Gray, in 1943 himself a young *Free Press* reporter on assignment in Ottawa, recalls how fascinated Dexter and his wife Alice were with Gray's stories about his unemployment experiences during the early thirties. "It occurred to me," Gray observed, "that he had spent five years of his life in Ottawa during the Bennett administration [1930-1935] writing thousands of words almost daily on the unemployment relief crisis, and yet had never become aware of what unemployment relief meant to the people on relief."

Dexter considered himself a small "l" liberal, with a belief in a government responsible to the people, free

Grant Dexter: "Character, talent, hard work and a facile pen . . ."

trade, and the abolition of state privileges which enabled monopolies to exist. It would be unfair to label him a mere "partisan" — for as Hutchison wrote, "Grant was much too big for that" — but it was only natural that his close contacts with Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his cabinet (especially Thomas Crerar who revealed all government secrets to Dexter) drew him into the Liberal party fold. For one thing, Mackenzie King, the lonely bachelor, genuinely liked Dexter and the feelings were reciprocated. While Dexter considered King "a queer sort of fish", he wrote about him in his memos with respect and admiration, on occasion referring to King as "the Great Man". At Laurier House, at his office in the Parliament Buildings, or at Kingsmere, Dexter was the perfect guest; he listened intently to what the Prime Minister had to say, offered supportive advice and never publicly betrayed King's trust. After one such intensive discussion in January, 1945, King wrote in his diary, "I told Dexter confidentially what was in my mind which he seemed to appreciate very much and with which he was in entire accord. It seemed to give him a great thrill. He was most friendly in every way." All the while, of course, no less in King's mind was the thought that his innermost secrets would be transmitted back to Winnipeg (or at least most of them; Dexter had no knowledge of King's "other life") and used by Dafoe or Ferguson for the next day's editorial page leader.

For King this was a convenient and beneficial arrangement; for Dexter, however, the line between being a good journalist and a party hack was often blurred. More than once, his loyalty to the Liberal cause and the belief that the Tories offered no superior alternative put him in a compromising position. He attended private Liberal "Board of Strategy" meetings where advice and recommendations on *Free Press* articles was freely given; in October 1941 he helped Jack Pickersgill revise a memo on price and wage control policy for the cabinet; and he was recruited by the National Liberal Federation (NLF) to write election propaganda, a task he privately resented. "I wrote the piece practically in the middle of Wellington Street," he told George Ferguson regarding work on a Liberal election pamphlet in February, 1940. "I had to submit the job I did for Willie [King] to [Norman] Lambert [head of the NLF] and I camped in his office, using a typewriter there, with all the Grits in creation milling around. I am finished being a ghost, even for Mackenzie King."

In the days following the end of the World War II, Dexter produced some of his best work. He was in San Francisco for the creation of the United Nations and back in Ottawa to assist the Liberals in the federal election of 1945. "He turned out whole series of articles documenting the lunacies that the Tories and CCF had epoused," recalls James Gray, "and contrasted them with the inspired measures the Liberals had undertaken."

'One of the most influential Canadians of his time'

After John W. Dafoe died in 1944, however, *Free Press* publisher Victor Sifton twisted Dexter's arm until he finally and reluctantly agreed to relocate to Winnipeg to help edit the newspaper. It was a grave mistake. Having operated as a lone reporter for so long, Dexter could not adapt to working on an editorial team. After several very trying years, he returned to Ottawa in 1951. When he died a decade later, Bruce Hutchison wrote that "the combination of character, talent, hard work and a facile pen . . . made Grant, though he would be the last to realize it, one of the most influential Canadians of his time." ♦

Allan Levine is a Winnipeg historian and writer. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book, "Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media" to be published in 1993.

Off-the-Record With Mr. King

On 28 February 1942, Grant Dexter and Bruce Hutchison (later editor of the "Victoria Times" and the "Vancouver Sun") had a private audience with Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. The talk was of wartime propaganda, the conduct of the war, conscription and the future of responsible government. An account of the meeting was duly dispatched by Dexter to J.W. Dafoe in Winnipeg, as follows:

28 February 1942
Source: Mackenzie King, prime minister.

Bruce [Hutchison] and I had a long talk with King yesterday afternoon. In parts, the talk was intensely interesting.

He saw us in the little cubby-hole office he has back of the House of Commons. This room used to belong to the Sergeant-at-Arms. But when, back about 1925, Col. Bowie, the Sergeant-at-Arms, carried out an ill-timed raid on members' rooms to search their desks for liquor, King took advantage of the unbounded indignation to cut Bowie's throat and chuck his successor out of the quarters. The office is just across the hall from the Commons entrance alongside the Speaker's throne.

Bare little room with low ceilings, a desk, two leather-upholstered chesterfield chairs and an ornate, flamboyantly curved settee. Settee is pure Victorian at its worst, and plainly was King's favourite roosting spot. Artificial electric-fire grate. Windows looking across the canal towards the Chateau and the Laurentians. Glass partly frosted. Noticed, for the first time, a wee bedroom leading off the office — decorated in chastest white, with palish yellow tasselled bedspread over the bed.

Brucie talked about the need for publicity in the U.S. King listened, perched in a corner of the settee, and looking with desire in his eyes at the fat, stuffy little footrest which lay under his desk. His spectacles were thrust well on to the bridge of his nose and the lenses were very smudged. He listened to Brucie [speaking of the need for wartime propaganda], murmuring encouraging words, and I thought getting a bit of amusement out of the way Brucie waved his arms. He replied that there had been great difficulties, as Brucie knew, great difficulties — Roosevelt and so on. But he thought the situation had been improved of late — and to tell the truth he had completely lost touch with the thing. He would look into it and see if he could not push things along. Very important and who would Brucie suggest? Bruce put in a gigantic plug for Charlie Vining [Vining became chairman of the new Wartime Information Board in August 1942 and held the post until the end of January 1943] and, not without malice, I suggested Brucie himself might do rather well. King rose to this magnificently. He looked rather intently at Brucie — his glasses being badly smudged — and asked him if he would tackle the job. Brucie swallowed vigorously and disclaimed any talent for it, but added that, if the government of Canada asked him to do anything for the war, he would do his simple best. Don't know what King understood this to mean.

Then talked about B.C. defence and the war in general. King said that the war was going very badly. The truth is that plucky and all as the British have been, miraculous though the Russian resistance is, the enemy is still stronger than we are at every point. If Stalin was right and the Russians could hold the Germans this spring and summer, he felt sure that the war would be greatly shortened. But he had nothing reliable to go on in this regard and he was not very optimistic. He had felt right along that Japan will attack Russia in the east, Dutch Harbor [in the Aleutians] and Alaska and British Columbia just as soon as the Japs could muster the men and materials. Nothing could be more certain and in his judgment the shelling of the Californian coast was merely a ruse to attract our attention away from the northern coastline. He had been acutely aware of the peril on the coast ever since Japan delcared war and he was discouraged to find out that, although the U.S. had been preparing for war with Japan for 20 years, they had been substantially unready to repel such an attack last December. Today, the United States was incomparably stronger on the West Coast, particularly in Alaska. He knew something of the reinforcements which the U.S. had sent to Alaska and consequently was somewhat easier in his mind. Our own danger, however, was still very great.

The trouble, and Mr. King repeatedly caught himself up in referring critically to [Colonel James] Ralston [Minister of Defence] was that the cabinet was unable easily to modify existing war plans. The trouble was with Ralston and the general staff. Ralston stood up for the generals, fought the cabinet in their behalf. A most difficult situation. The true ambition of our general staff was to build up an army in Britain, not

Prime Minister Mackenzie King at his ease in Laurier House, Ottawa, after the war.

particularly for the defence of Britain but to be the spearhead of the attack on Germany. In the secret session [of parliament] — he caught himself up here and apologized for discussing what had been said at the secret session — anyway on a certain occasion, Ralston had said that our army plan was to build up a strong striking force in Britain because we would ultimately use Britain as the springboard for our thrust on the continent. When Ralston had sat down after saying this (at the secret session) King had told him that he had let the cat out of the bag. His words had revealed that all our generals were concerned about was to be in at the kill. King said that he had told Ralston, after the speech at the secret session: "Well, Ralston, you have made the mistake of your life by saying that we are sending an army over there to attack Germany. You know that our force is over there to defend the heart of the Empire."

He thought, however, that Ralston had been shaken down in the last few weeks and was beginning to be doubtful about the wisdom of the advice he had been getting. "I have talked to him again and again. I have asked him not once but many times why he does not tell the generals that we, the cabinet, think instead of continually telling us what the generals think. Generals are almost invariably wrong."

King egged Brucie and me on to keep banging away at the generals. He had done nothing to quiet the row on the Pacific Coast for more defence. He hoped it would continue. He had just appointed a Pacific Coast Japanese Evacuation Council of civilians, which would give these demands more direction and cohesion and thus might help overbalance the generals.

The expansion of our war industry would continue, regardless of what anyone said. The shortages, he thought, were in materials and management, but he could see no possibility of a halt. He knew that the country had never been so prosperous and, when Brucie said something about the mass of the workers, he at once replied that the mass of the people had never been as well off as they are now. They hadn't begun to feel the pinch of war.

He agreed that there was room for great expansion but said that there could be no purpose in shutting off civilian production until we could use it in war. This would come and having regard for the length of the war perhaps it was as well not to increase the strain of war beyond the actual needs of our war effort. He seemed quite pleased with the prospect of being criticized on this score. He didn't try to defend himself from charges of going too slowly. I gathered that the more he was pushed the better he would like it; that he rather wanted to be pushed and not to lead.

He had had a run-in with [Richard] Hanson [leader of the Opposition, 1940-1943] the preceding night and he got a bit unctuous in discussing it. Hanson — of all people — had made a crack at the Beauharnois campaign fund [contributions of the Beauharnois Corporation to the Liberal party in 1930], as if King's personal honour had been involved. He had put stop to that pretty fast.

The night of the by-elections had been the happiest night of all his life. [In the by-elections held on 9 February 1942 two new ministers, Louis St. Laurent and Humphrey Mitchell, were selected, and Arthur Meighen was defeated.] He had been much happier than on any general election night. Meighen [former Conservative Prime Minister 1920-1922] was an unbearable type of man. Had he got into the House, he would have lowered the whole tone of the debate. Mr. King indicated this by removing his spectacles and holding out his right hand (palm down) first at the crest of his reach and then down well below his knees. Of Meighen: "I hate him. I hate him so much." But

Meighen had been beaten and both cabinet ministers had been returned. The Meighen drive had had nothing to do with war policy or any public policy. It had been a conspiracy on the part of a few evil men to force their representatives into the government. Why, Hanson had come to him, privately, before Meighen's first attack on the government. Hanson had proposed that King take Meighen and Hanson into the government. They just wanted to be in the government and, Hanson had promised, they wouldn't make any trouble. Only after he had refused, did Meighen attack.

He was absolutely sure that the plebiscite [on conscription] would carry. He had taken the hurdle on the preceding night when he had said that he was prepared under the War Measures Act to send trainees, conscripts, to any point on this continent. As a matter of fact, in anticipation of a crisis, he had an opinion from the Law Officers of the Crown which was, unanimously, that under the War Measures Act the government could conscript men for overseas at any time it wanted to do so. The pledge was not legal or statutory, it was moral.

The people who had opposed the plebiscite so bitterly were now, he was pleased to notice (seraphic smile), supporting it and urging an affirmative vote. In fact nobody had noticed that the second reading of the plebiscite bill had carried unanimously — think of it, unanimously. And after all that Hanson and Bruce [Dr. Herbert A. Bruce, Conservative M.P. for Toronto Parkdale] and the rest, including Pouliot [Jean-François Pouliot, Liberal M.P. for Temiscouata] had said.

He was going to campaign for the plebiscite and meantime the education process was going on. Getting conscription with a united country would be the biggest triumph of the war.

In point of fact, there had been three great achievements (all of them his own, but this not mentioned). We had got into the war without a split; we would get conscription without a split; and it would be demonstrated that the much-maligned party system of government was quite equal to the — he suddenly stopped here. He had become really expansive on the party government line, was grinning from ear to ear, and slapping his leg above the knee with a kind of joyful and boyish exuberance. He sobered up, scowled at Brucie, and said that when he had been at Harvard he had made a deep study of responsible government. He thought Sir Henry Maine's *Popular Government* the best work on the subject. He quotes him extensively in his book (*Industry and Humanity*). However, he didn't finish this little lecture on the party system except that he made it clear that opposition parties should stay put.

There was no future for the Tory party. It would become clearer as time passed that the opposition to the government would come from radical parties. He spoke without a trace of grief, rather as St. George might have commented after his encounter with the dragon

Bruce Hutchison: An autograph for Mr. King.

At this point, the secretary came in with copy of *The Unknown Country* [Hutchison's patriotic book about Canada] garish and blatant in this subdued atmosphere. Ah yes. An excellent book. Everyone was speaking to him about it. Would Brucie mind autographing the copy? Books were precious things. Had Brucie ever read his own little volume, *The Secret of Heroism?* Bruce apologized profusely. Well, he had just gone through it again after 40 years — or was it forty-one years. He reflected a moment and one could imagine volumes of the diary being whisked over, millions of pages fanning back in the remote past. Yes, it was 41 years ago and he would not change a word of it, not one. I asked about Harper [Bert Harper, King's boyhood friend who drowned in the Ottawa River in December 1901 attempting to rescue a young woman, Bessie Blair, who had gone through the ice while skating]. He must have been a very fine chap etc. etc. Indeed, he was. Harper had had a dash of Irish in him. Mr. King spoke very happily of Harper, very happily. Perhaps he felt as if Harper would not have regretted being drowned, knowing that in drowning he would give his country *The Secret of Herosim.*

He fussed us out of the office, pulled his spectacles down on his nose, and turned to meet the next customer. ♦

A selection of Grant Dexter's memoranda, covering the years of World War II, have been edited by F.W. Gibson of the Department of History, Queen's University, and will be published by the Manitoba Record Society in 1993.

The Other Gulf War

There Was a Nose-to-Nose Confrontation When Lyman Cutler Shot the HBC Pig

By ALBERT G. FOWLER

When American settler Lyman Cutler shot a Hudson's Bay Company pig in the early hours of 15 June 1859, he had no idea that such a mindless action might bring Great Britain and the United States to the brink of war. The death of the black, marauding swine in Cutler's potato patch on San Juan Island, just eight miles from Victoria, brought into the open the frustrations of men of action on both sides of the border. It highlighted the colonists' fear of the growing tide of American settlers that was now surging in their direction and the growing lack of interest in the colonies by the Motherland. The incident led to a nose-to-nose confrontation between British and American soldiers that would last for twelve years.

It was the first day of August when the news of the clandestine landing of United States soldiers reached the citizens of Victoria. The editor of the *British Colonist* described the event as ". . . . an act of treason to the age and mankind" and ranted on: "Like thieves in the night . . . they sought to plant themselves on an island over which we have exercised sovereignty many years and to which, by every rule of right . . . we are lawfully entitled."

The *Colonist* went on to describe the roots of the difficulty as being the unsettled boundary between the United States and Vancouver's Island. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 had fixed the starting point of the boundary on the 49th parallel, "in the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island." This meant in the middle of the Gulf of Georgia. From this point the line was to go ". . . southerly through the middle of the said channel". To British eyes this indicated that the boundary went southerly through Rosario Channel, on to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and westward to the Pacific. This made San Juan Island British. The Americans believed that the boundary went south further to the west, through the channel known as Haro Canal. That made San Juan an American island.

Originally, the trouble was caused by misinformation. The men who drafted the Oregon Treaty had never seen the San Juan archipelago. To make matters worse, they were working with the outdated reports of Captain George Vancouver. In 1792, Vancouver had mentioned only the one small island of San Juan which was bounded, on the eastern side, by the navigable Rosario or Vancouver Strait. In the early days, ships from every nation used Rosario as the main channel. On the western side of the island, Vancouver described a dangerous and uncharted channel known as Canal de Haro. On most charts of the day the Canal de Haro was shown to be closed at its northern end by an ill defined cluster of islands.

At first the lack of specific detail went by without notice but, as time passed and the population increased in the area, Haro Strait was found to be navigable and to be the quickest route between Victoria and the growing settlement of Nanaimo. Some Americans, like Brigadier-General W.S. Harney, the Military Commander-in-Chief of the State of Oregon, came to look upon San Juan Island as a place of great strategic importance. He called it "the Cuba of the west" and saw the island as the ideal place from which to control the "savage Indians" from the north and the water route to the mainland. This added weight to the American perspective that Haro Canal was the boundary and that San Juan was theirs. The British and, in particular Governor James Douglas, saw this as one more act of American expansionism. Specific directions from the home government were required, but they were not forthcoming.

British settlers west of the Rockies and representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company had already felt threatened by the large numbers of Americans surging westward and northward over their territory. When the Treaty of Oregon was signed everyone north of the border had assumed that the boundary between the nations would have been drawn along the Columbia

British Columbia Archives

By the end of August 1859 the Americans had 400 men on San Juan Island, ready to repel invaders.

River. When the British government gave away everything south of the 49th parallel, the British settlers felt betrayed by what they saw as the unnecessary "surrender" of valuable land to the Americans.

In Britain, the economic and political powers had come to realize that greater wealth could be gained by trade than by colonization. The traditional concept of the Hudson's Bay Company and its sister companies around the globe was to reward investors with trade monopolies and so encourage the exploration of new territories. But Britain had found that the maintenance of colonies around the world was difficult and expensive. There was a growing feeling that the colonies were a millstone around her neck.

On the other side of the coin, the Royal Navy had been looking for a suitable station in the North Pacific. Although Esquimalt on Vancover Island was not formally established as a naval depot until 1865, it was looked upon and used as the northern station from the early 1840s. In the boundary negotiations, Vancouver Island was the prize and anything in between was looked upon as an extra benefit.

The Hudson's Bay Company was charged to establish settlements of resident colonists to secure the area against American expansion. It was hoped that the Company would discourage American interlopers and encourage British gentlemen farmers to open up and possess the land, making Vancouver Island into a miniature version of the Motherland. Company control would ensure that Vancouver Island remained in British hands and that the North Pacific Station would be secure.

Governor Douglas sent Charles J. Griffin to establish a farm on San Juan Island in 1853. Buildings were constructed and three thousand sheep were brought in from Nisqually, Washington, along with a few cattle, oxen and servants — and possibly a pig.

About the same time and in spite of Douglas's efforts, the Americans decided that it was their turn to act. They formally declared the San Juans to be American territory and a part of Whatcom County. In 1854 they conducted the first census on the island and reported 4,500 sheep, 40 cattle, 5 yoke of oxen and 18 servants. Next, the Americans attempted to collect taxes on the Hudson's Bay Company sheep which, mistakenly, they claimed had been imported from another country without the payment of duty.

With the conflict continuing to heat up, something had to be done and a boundary commission was estab-

British Columbia Archives

First camp of the Royal Marines at Roche Harbour, 1860.

lished in 1856. The British commissioners wanted to clarify the ownership of the San Juan Archipelago, but the Americans insisted on including in the discussion the boundary on the mainland right back to the mountains. Unable to agree at the local level, the commissioners referred the whole issue to their respective governments. In good faith and to help clarify where the 49th parallel fell on the mainland, a detachment of Royal Engineers went out to survey west of the Rockies.

As one further complication, gold was discovered on the Fraser River and it brought a small flood of American adventurers to Vancouver Island. In 1854 the population of Fort Victoria was only 70 people and the colony was controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company. On 25 April 1858 the population doubled in one afternoon. On a day two months later, 2,800 men arrived from the south to get food and supplies and to begin their search for gold. By the end of 1858, 30,000 people had passed through Victoria enroute to the gold fields. Victoria was becoming far too important a place to remain as a Hudson's Bay Company outpost and control of the colony was taken away from the Company. James Douglas was named governor of the new colony, ending his former connection with the HBC.

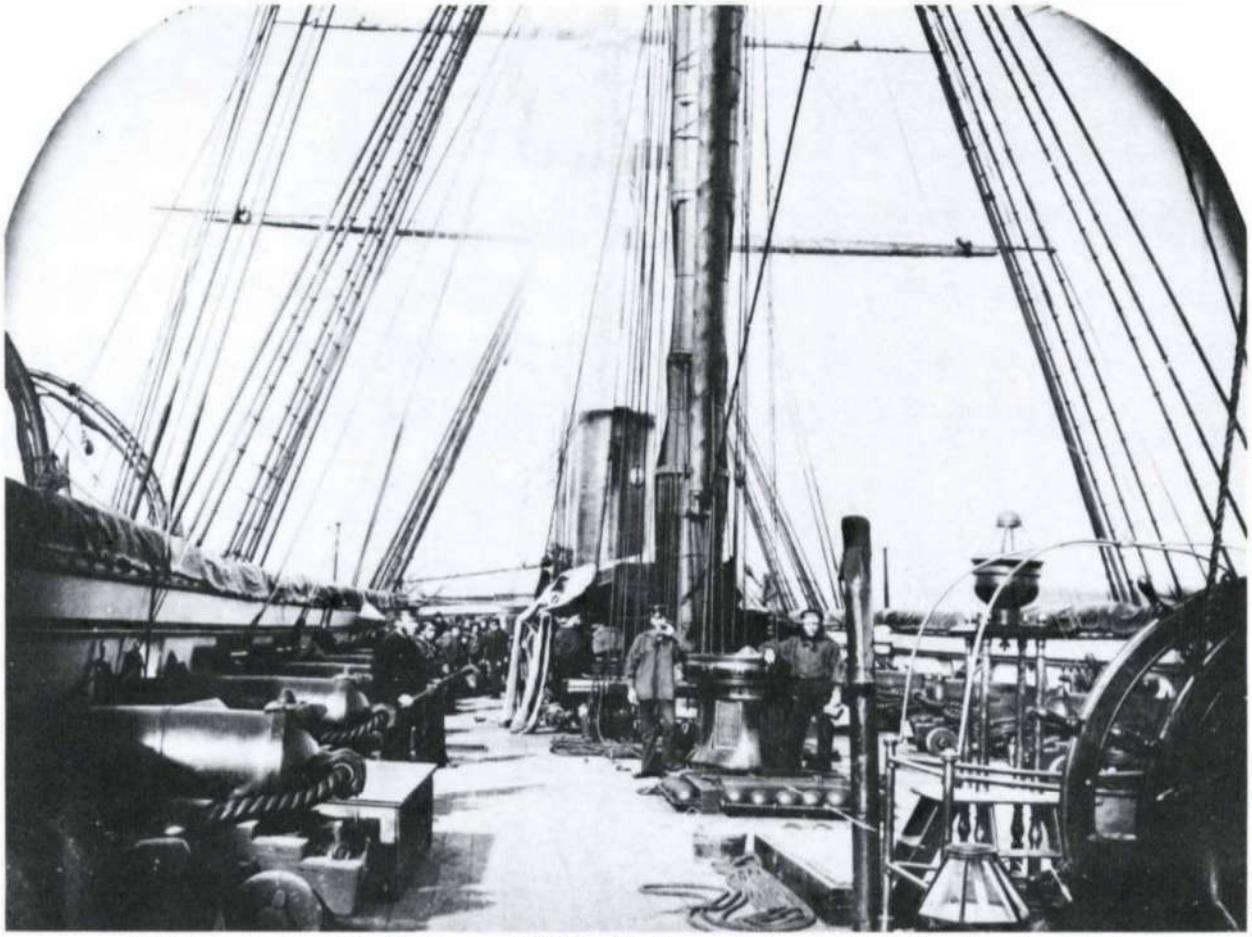
It was around this time that the pig was slain. The Company boar had made repeated visits to root up Lyman A. Cutler's potatoes. On or about the 15th of June 1859, totally frustrated by the persistence of the unwanted visitor, Cutler shot and killed the animal.

At this point serious contradictions enter the narrative. According to an American version of the story, Farmer Griffin and officials of the Hudson's Bay Company, led by senior Company representative Alexander Grant Dallas, ordered Cutler to pay $100 in compensation or else be taken to Victoria to stand trial. In a British version of the story, Dallas and his colleagues simply remonstrated with the American settler, who responded with a threat to shoot any other Company animal that wandered onto his land.

Line claimed by the United States.

Line claimed by Great Britain.

Proposed Middle Channel.



British Columbia Archives

British firepower was considerable. The guns of HMS Satellite II are ready for action, but the Royal Navy is restrained.

In late July Governor Douglas appointed Major John de Courcy magistrate and justice of the peace and sent him to San Juan on H.M.S. *Satellite* with instructions to enforce law and order on the "British island". Even as de Courcy travelled to the disputed island, Victoria newspapers, who knew nothing of the pig incident, criticized the government for creating one more sinecure for a gentleman and one more tax drain on the common man's purse. On 27 July 1859, de Courcy landed on San Juan and read his commission. He then hoisted a small Union Jack near the Hudson's Bay Company establishment at Griffin Bay.

Keeping in close touch with the dispute from the other side of the border was General W.S. Harney. Harney was a hot-headed general who wanted to be president and who believed in the concept of "manifest destiny". In a letter to Governor Douglas dated 6 August 1859 Harney declared that he had placed a military command on San Juan Island:

> . . . to protect the American citizens residing on that island from the insults and the indignities which the British authorities of Vancouver Island, and the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company have recently offered them by sending a British ship of war from Vancouver Island, to convey the chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company to San Juan, for the purpose of seizing an American citizen and forcibly transporting him to Vancouver Island to be tried by British laws.

On 18 July 1859 Harney ordered Captain G.E. Pickett to go to San Juan from Bellingham and occupy the island. The official reason for sending the soldiers was to respond to the request from "American citizens for protection against the attacks of Indians." The presence of the soldiers also would protect Americans against interference by British authorities and would strengthen the claim of the United States to the islands.

On 26 July United States troops of the 9th Infantry were landed on San Juan Island at the Hudson's Bay Company wharf and set about making a camp next to Griffin's farm. They numbered between 40 and 63 men and were the first of four or five companies destined for the occupation.

The next day Captain Pickett issued an order to all inhabitants of the island:

> I. In compliance with orders and instructions from the General Commanding, a Military Post will be established on this Island, on whatever site the Commanding Officer may select.
>
> II. All of the inhabitants of the island are requested to report at once to the Commanding officer, in case of any incursion of the northern Indians — so that he may take such steps as he may deem necessary to prevent any further occurrence of the same.
>
> III. This being United States Territory, no Laws, other than those of the U.S., nor courts, except such as are held be virtue of said Laws, will be recognized, or allowed on this island.
>
> By Order of Capt Pickett

This was contrary to the Marcy-Crampton agreement of 1855 which recognized the dilemma of the San Juans and had put a hold on all such claims until the boundary issue had been settled. It would appear that neither Harney nor Pickett had ever heard about the Marcy-Crampton agreement.

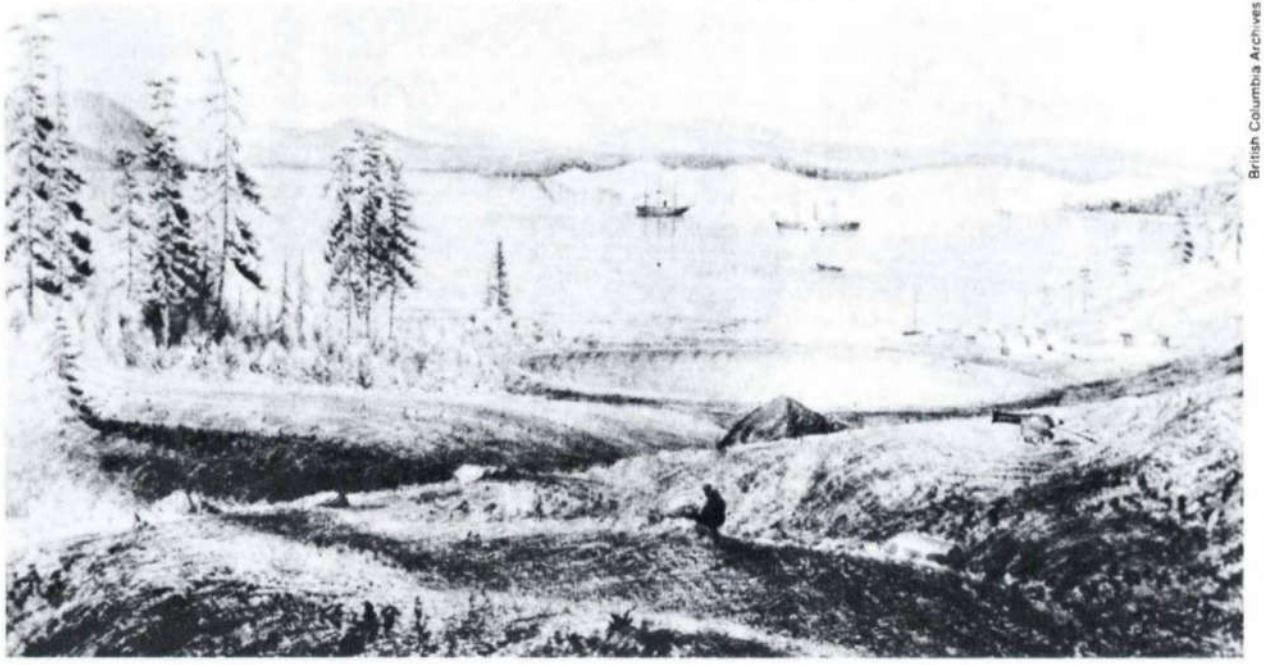
After reading the proclamation Magistrate de Courcy served Capt. Pickett with a summons for trespassing on lands used by the Hudson's Bay Company for a sheep pasture. The case was to be heard at 6 PM. on Saturday 30 July, but Pickett failed to respond.

When Governor Douglas learned of Pickett's defiance he ordered an equal number of British soldiers to land on San Juan. Their orders were to reject all "squatters" until the dispute was settled and to prevent any further foreign intrusions. Governor Douglas saw all Americans as intruders and opportunists. During the gold rush they had descended on Victoria and on the Fraser River and he had been successful only when he dealt firmly with them. He would do so again on San Juan. Because of the Royal Navy's presence in Esquimalt, Douglas knew that military power was on his side.

Immediately, H.M.S. *Tribune* and H.M.S. *Satellite* were dispatched from Esquimalt. When the ships arrived at San Juan they went on stations in the bay in front of the American camp. The sole purpose of this show of force was to prevent the building of fortifications and the landing of any more American soldiers. The Americans had two guns and less than one hundred soldiers. The British ships carried 800 soldiers and 52 guns.

Decisive action could have been taken quickly, but British naval officers around the world had been charged from the highest levels at home to avoid bloodshed and "local collisions" at all costs. Also, most of the Royal Navy's supplies and mail came across the continent to Vancouver Island by American routes. Hoping to avert a confrontation, the senior British Officer in charge, Captain Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, took his second in command and went ashore to look for Captain Pickett. They had not been gone long when the American armed transport *Massachusetts* appeared with 120 troops on board. British first lieutenant Davis

A sketch of the harbour from the Hudson's Bay Company farm, San Juan.



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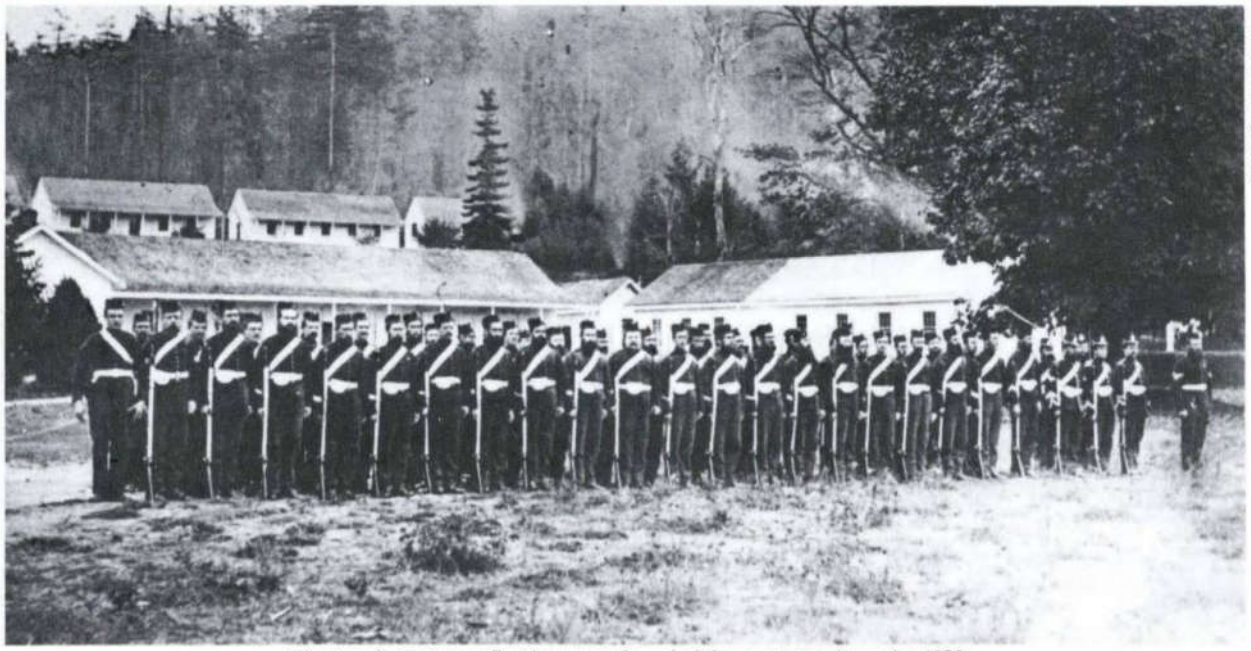

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The British garrison on San Juan near the end of the occupation, November 1872.

Boyle on the *Tribune* told the American captain that *Tribune* was there to prevent landings and that he would open fire if necessary. The American captain ignored him and landed supplies. War seemed imminent but moments before the first shots were fired, HMS *Plumper* appeared in the bay with more British troops from Queenborough and the latest news from Victoria.

The Legislative Council had met in Victoria and decided that British troops would be landed and shots fired only if the honour and interests of Britain were in jeopardy. To the editor of the *British Colonist* there was no question but that British honour was at stake, but in the eyes of the Royal Navy, British citizens were not endangered and so there was no need for action. The American soldiers were permitted to land on San Juan unhindered by the British.

Douglas was furious and blamed Hornby for inactivity. The navy was lambasted by the Victoria newspapers. In Friday morning's editorial, 5 August, the *British Colonist* sneered that it was apparent that "paper bullets only will be fired, and the only claret spilt will be French." Even the surgeon on board HMS *Plumper* wrote that San Juan was the military key to the interior of British Columbia and there was no reason why the superior British Forces could not have taken the Americans. In a letter to his headquarters, Pickett agreed that the British could have won any battle. Pickett reported: "They have a force so much superior to mine that it will be merely a mouthful to them." But guided by the policy of restraint at home and abroad and using patience and sound judgement, the Royal Navy was able to avoid open warfare.

The American people were not sure what was happening. Papers presented the American point of view and reported that the situation was serious. The *Pioneer and Democrat* published in Olympia, Washington, on 12 August reported that the "ship *Tribune* lies with spring cables and her guns double-shotted, broadside to the camp of Captain Pickett; her decks are covered with red coats, having on board 450 marines and some 180 sappers and miners." In fact, the British just sat there while the Americans continued to land soldiers, build fortifications and to stake their claims to the island. By the end of two weeks Pickett had 400 men, 6 field pieces and from 100 to 150 artillerymen in his camp. The British kept their soldiers aboard ship and waited for diplomacy to act.

It was the middle of September before news reached Washington, D.C., and action was taken. The country was embarrassed by the way in which the situation had escalated and President James Buchanan sent General Winfield Scott, Commander in Chief of the United States Army, a man respected by Americans and Englishmen alike, to check into the actions of General Harney. On arrival in October, Scott assumed immediate control of the United States forces on the Pacific Coast. The papers were delighted. The *British Colonist* reported that ". . . . instead of laurels for disturbing the peace of the border, he is very quietly, respectfully, and deservedly made a subordinate in the

British Columbia Archives

The American artillery camp, San Juan, at the height of the stand-off.

theatre of his glory". By 7 December, all of the British vessels, except H.M.S. *Satellite*, were withdrawn and it was time for negotiation.

Scott proposed that the island be jointly occupied by an equal number of troops from each nation, while the British proposed the withdrawal of all troops and the return to the situation as it had been before the incident. Eventually Scott and Douglas agreed to a plan of joint occupation, whereby each government was ultimately represented by a company of 100 men.

On 20 March 1860, Rear-Admiral Robert Lambert Baynes, on orders from the home government, landed British troops on San Juan. The soldiers, a detachment of Royal Marines under Captain George Bazalgrette, was brought from the fleet in Victoria and landed in Roche Harbour on the north point of the island. They were located ten miles north of the United States troops, who then numbered 87.

Discussions continued and it looked as though the occupation of the San Juans would be ended in the early part of 1861 when Captain Pickett received orders that he was to withdraw all of the United States troops from the island. At the same time, Captain Bazalgrette was given the order to remain. Later, the order to withdraw the United States troops was cancelled.

The joint occupation continued for another ten years, until 1872 when the matter went to international arbitration. It was resolved by the Emperor of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm I, who saw Haro Strait as the main geographic channel and also noted that in discussions leading to the previous treaty, all that the British side had really asked for was Vancouver Island. On receiving news of the decision, which has been called the Treaty of Washington, all British soldiers were withdrawn and San Juan Island became a part of the United States.

Of course there was still the matter of Cutler and the pig. After everything had settled down, Cutler appeared before an American magistrate. In the end, Cutler was given a small fine for shooting the Hudson's Bay Company pig. ♦

Albert G. Fowler is a military chaplain at Royal Roads Military College, Victoria, British Columbia.

All for Love

A tragedy of the heart in old Upper Canada

by CHRIS RAIBLE

What a place this Little York is for scandal! Nothing can equal it! Had we set apart but one number . . . to embody the tales of the vulgar great with whose residence this place is honoured, we could have set the good people our neighbours and friends at pulling caps; aye even in time of church service.

William Lyon Mackenzie,
***Colonial Advocate*, 4 May 1826.**

The story is the stuff of gothic novels — or of soap operas.

Its principal characters: Anne Powell and John Beverley Robinson.

Its setting: York, capital of Upper Canada, in the early years of the last century.

Anne's father, William Dummer Powell, was one of the original members of the provincial Court of King's Bench, appointed in 1791. He and wife Anne Murray, Loyalists who had left New England with the outbreak of the American Revolution, were thus among the founding parents of the province's ruling Establishment. During the years of the administration of Lieutenant-Governor Francis Gore, Powell was admitted to the inner circles of influence, becoming an Executive Councillor and in 1816 Chief Justice.

Anne was their eldest daughter. Born in 1787 in Montreal, she grew up to become, according to the reports of the time, a beautiful, witty and intelligent woman — also, as we shall see, one who was self-willed and at times unconventional. She had been educated in England, but was back living with her family in York (Toronto) during the years just before the War of 1812.

John Beverley Robinson was also born in Canada, also of Loyalist stock — his family from Virginia. Soon after the death of his father, John came under the tutelage of the Reverend Doctor (later Bishop) John Strachan in Cornwall. Strachan virtually adopted John: taught him, pushed him, promoted him, advised him — loved him. In 1807 John moved to York to study law with D'Arcy Boulton and to become very much a part of the Boulton family. Indeed John's sister Sarah Anne married D'Arcy, Jr. — a union, Strachan advised his former prize pupil, which "may be of some advantage to you." Marital connections were already becoming recognized as important to the coalescing "Family Compact." About this time Judge Powell also took John under his judicial wing and became his legal mentor.

Again according to contemporary accounts, John was perhaps the most handsome man in York — not that in the tiny capital there were many men of her social standing for Anne to look at. (Highly successful merchant Quetten St. George had once dared to propose marriage, but her mother had scoffed at the idea of a union with a Frenchman!) How much John may have looked at Anne, an attractive woman several years his senior, is not recorded. "One thing is certain," John was to be reminded some years later by Strachan, "by every account the young Lady was *distracted after you*."

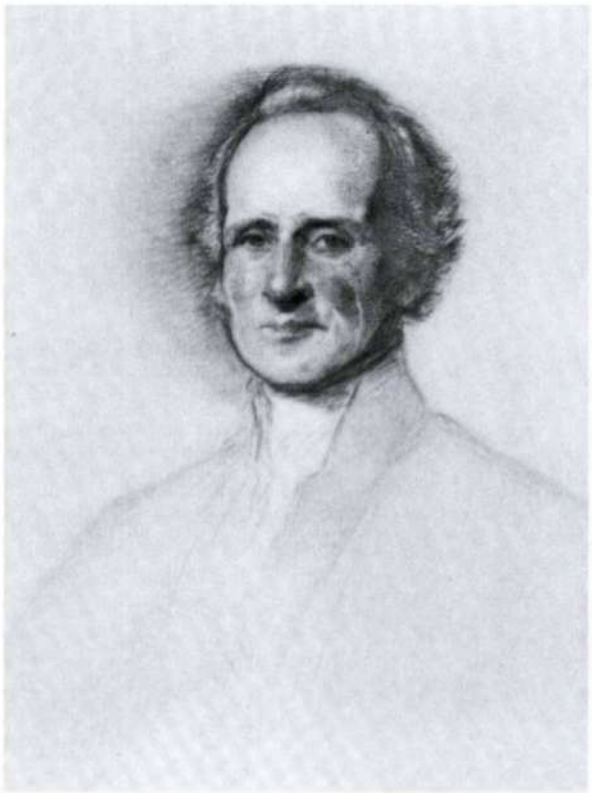
With the outbreak of the War of 1812, John was called into duty as a militia officer, lieutenant in the Third York Regiment. Anne and other young women "with a fervour of patriotism, literally above commendation," the press dutifully reported, "prepared a Banner" to commend the regiment's "gallant achieve-

ment" in the British-Canadian victory at Detroit early in the war. This flag, embroidered with the motto "Deeds Speak," was formally presented to the regiment at a ceremony organized by Strachan who was by then himself settled in the provincial capital. Anne spoke on behalf of its makers, the Young Ladies of York:

> Receive it as a proof that they strongly participate in that generous patriotism which burns with so pure a flame through the province. And when you behold it unfurled in the Day of Battle, let it become a kind remembrance of the unlimited confidence they place in the efficacy of your protection.
>
> (*Kingston Gazette*, 20 April 1813)

In November of 1812, the vagaries of war created a sudden vacancy — Attorney General D'Arcy Boulton, on board a ship captured by the enemy, became a French prisoner. Robinson, a brilliant law clerk but not yet of age and not yet even called to the bar, was the best man in Upper Canada immediately available. He was named, thanks to Powell, "acting" Attorney General for the entire province. The appointment propelled John into a position of political prominence. He would exert a powerful influence for half a century.

In the course of the next few years, John and Anne saw a good deal of each other. Perhaps private promises were made — certainly Strachan, and all the other York matchmakers, had a marriage of the two very



John Beverley Robinson: "Perhaps the most handsome man in York". A sketch made by George Richmond in 1855. From "The Canadian Magazine".

much in mind. Indeed, some said Powell had been motivated to recommend his clerk's interim appointment as Attorney General by the expectation that the young man would soon become his son-in-law. Years later Powell indignantly denied the allegation:

> Dr. Strachan's infamous suggestion, that the protections I had afforded to his Pupil . . . originated and were continued with the only view of promoting a union between my oldest daughter, [is] preposterous in every sense, from the inequality of age, the female's exceeding by ten years at least the age of Mr. Robinson.

(Their age difference was in fact four years, four months.)

At the end of the war, John sailed to England to complete his formal studies. York society continued its eager expectations about the couple, especially when Anne, in her willful way, managed to follow John a few months later. Strachan's messages from York, with their reflections on the "loss we sustain in the departure of Miss Powell," were no doubt very clear to the young attorney.

But John's absence had made his heart grow fonder — of someone else — of Emma Walker, who happily reciprocated his affection. Before committing herself to a marriage, however, Emma intelligently insisted that John meet and settle his affairs with Anne:

> It is rather an arduous undertaking for you, and will require penetration to discover her [Anne's] meaning and nice consideration politely to tell her yours.

When the news reached York of John's altered amorous interests, Strachan was distressed that he had not been told personally. He was also worried:

> The Judge surprised me with intelligence that you were going to be married to an English Lady, and appeared much surprised to learn that I knew nothing of it before . . . I want to ascertain if you were under any engagements, directly or indirectly to Miss P.

The ever-political parson was fearful that the projected union with Emma would cause a breach in John's long standing and most useful friendship with the Powell family. Their previous "expectation" regarding the young attorney, Strachan mused, "now requires some explanation." The Reverend Doctor advised John to head off possible problems by writing personally — and quickly — to Powell:

> I should have saved myself and you the trouble of this letter did I not anticipate difficulty. I may be mistaken, I wish I may, it is however good to be prepared not only for open but covert attacks.

John and Emma were married in 1817. The new Mr. and Mrs. Robinson sailed for Canada. With the war's end, Boulton had been released to return to his post as Attorney General, but John was named Solicitor General. When Boulton was elevated to the King's Bench in 1818, Robinson moved back to his old duties as Attorney General.

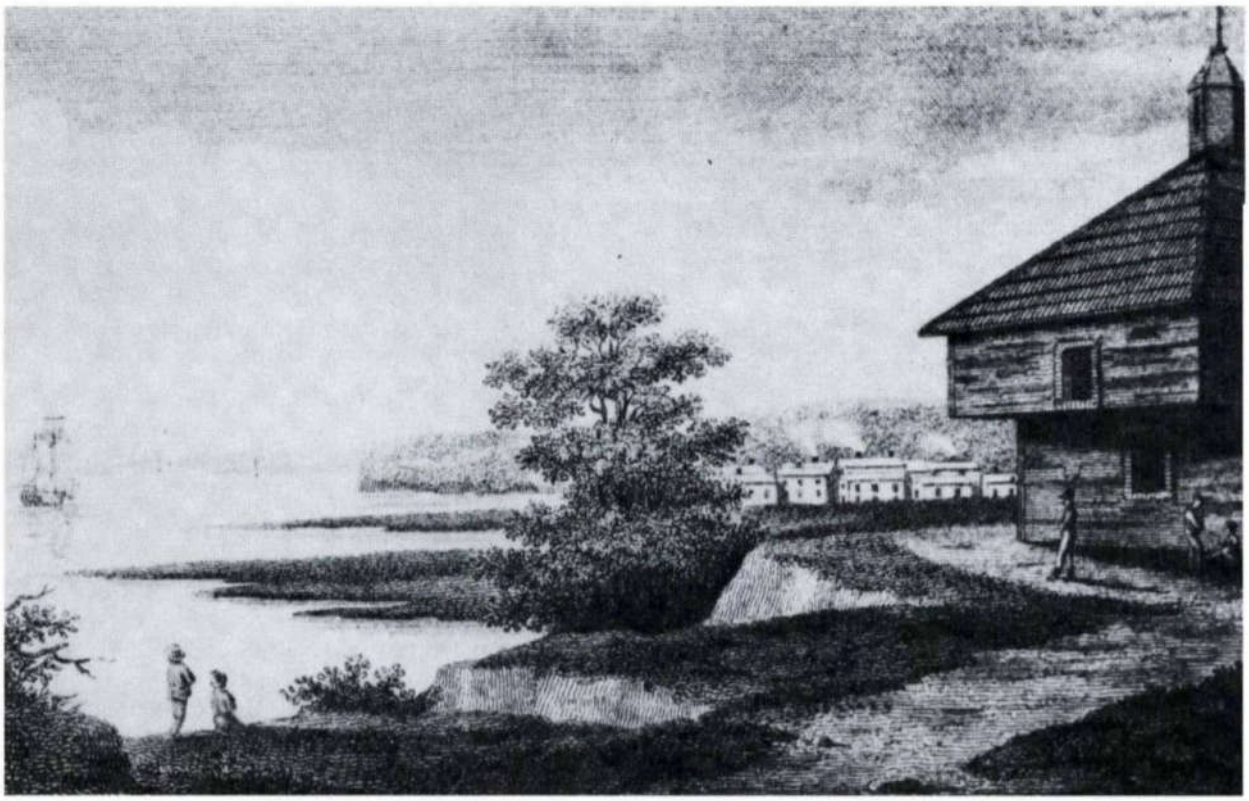
Anne stayed in England. To her mother she wrote of her approval of the new Mrs. John Beverley Robinson, but hinted at some mysterious, unexplained Walker family skeleton:

> She is I believe thoroughly amiable; poor thing, hers is a romantic history; that her father was lost in so miserable a manner; his death in a less tragical way could not have been considered as misfortune.

Anne's letter showed her own smart political sense (no wonder Strachan liked her). Despite all disappointments, she advised her family, they should be sure to keep up a "friendly intercourse" with John. He, too, would surely want it, "and those who know how inestimable such a friend is, will never neglect him, even if they love him less than I think you all must."

But Anne was not happy in England. She was pleased to learn that her sister Mary planned to wed Samuel Peters Jarvis, but she saw no prospects for herself:

> What I call a fine young man is not often to be met with in England, in general those who are clever are



Metro Toronto Public Library

York harbour in 1812, a view from the eastern blockhouse above the harbour entrance.

anything but good, and those who are good are anything but clever.

By the end of 1819, Anne herself was back in York, but no happier — indeed she was miserable. With nowhere else to go, the intense and independent woman of thirty-two years had returned home. Her aging parents had taken her in — and she hated it. "Had I at this moment the most disagreeable [place] in the world to go," she told her sister, "I would quit this house forever."

Her unhappiness began to take a bizarre turn, as revealed by another outpouring to sister Mary:

> I have everything that can most cruelly hurt a woman of my feelings and in my situation to contend with. . . . I look at myself in the glass, my own appearance does astonish me — Fancy me with all my idle fears of dark and solitude, shut out from all intercourse with the rest of the family as soon as night comes — Think of Mother who cannot rest on her pillow until she has made the heart of her daughter hate.

Anne Powell was an unmarried woman in a society that had no place for her, in a home she felt had no love for her, in a very little town that really had no room for her. Her old passion for John did not diminish, deny it as she might.

Anne's relationship with the Robinsons became something of an embarrassment. She persisted in calling on the family at their renovated residence Beverley House (the former Boulton home John had known) too often. Eventually Emma instructed her servants to turn Anne away. On at least one occasion Anne was discovered alone in the mansion, fondling the Robinson's infant son. Her behaviour became the talk of the town, but nobody did anything — nobody knew what to do.

Early in 1822 the Robinsons announced plans to travel to England — John had business to transact as a Commissioner on behalf of the provincial government. A rumour quickly spread through little York that Anne expected to go with them. John (and no doubt Emma!) totally rejected the idea, but Anne was set. The more he refused, the more adamant she became. She wrote him a series of what his brother William described as "some of the D--ndest letters you ever saw." Her mother, distressed that such feelings by her own daughter could be written — or by anyone she knew might be read — described these letters as —

> a tissue of unladylike observations, or rather details of a systematic persecution in which she persevered, convinced that she is acting the part of a Christian . . . They are so unlike the style of a delicate or sane

Beverley House, the Robinson home in York, photographed in 1905 when a Robinson son was still living there.

> woman that I cannot relate their contents. The desire that every one should see them is . . . proof of vain folly, for they are calculated . . . to confirm every unfavourable impression.

(Thousands of pages of correspondence of York families — the Powells, the Jarvises, the Robinsons, and others — have survived and are now carefully preserved in the Baldwin Room of the Metro Toronto Reference Library, in the Archives of Ontario, and in the National Archives of Canada. Not one letter from Anne Powell to John Beverley Robinson is to be found among them.)

No argument could dissuade the determined, the disturbed, Anne. She was going to go. The families felt forced to take more desperate measures. The Robinsons decided upon a secret departure that they might leave town before Anne learned of it. The Powells kept Anne under virtual house arrest. Her brother Grant confiscated and locked up all her baggage, much to the distress of her young nieces who seemed to be the only ones in the family who sympathized with the agonies of poor Aunt Anne.

The Rev. Dr. Strachan was summoned. He sensibly spirited Anne away from the troubled atmosphere. Whether by pious prayers or personal pleadings, he at last extracted from the tormented woman her firm pledge to remain in York. Late in the evening he brought her home.

The next day her room was empty. Anne had learned that the Robinsons had left — she had quickly followed. Her servant had been watching their residence and had told her when they departed. (The servant was dismissed.) Her nieces had been recruited to assist her and had been sworn to secrecy. (The nieces were disciplined.) But it was all too late. Anne had slipped from her room early in the morning with nothing but the clothes she wore. She climbed aboard a cutter she had previously clandestinely engaged and she was gone — well on her way before her parting was discovered.

She was gone — and all York knew it. James Small coming into town had passed her and recognized her on the Kingston Road. The town heard the tale almost before the Powells had missed her. The story was the subject of conversation at Government House — and surely at every other house in the capital. Oh the disgrace, oh the distress to her moaning mother:

> No human being has been near us today . . . It is too recent for me to expect sympathy, those who feel it are prevented from delicacy, those who make it a joke are averse to shewing their indifference; where she is God knows; my heart bleeds for the inevitable miseries she has drawn down upon her head.

Anne followed the Robinsons east and then south. At Albany she caught up with them. Thereafter they could not decently prevent her travelling with them. In New York Anne had an uncle, George Murray, she

could stay with. But when she tried to book a passage on the same ship as the Robinsons, the captain of the *Manhattan* refused her money. He had been most explicitly informed that if he allowed her aboard, he would lose the whole party of Robinsons as passengers. The *Manhattan* sailed for England, leaving Anne behind on the dock.

Anne booked a space on the next ship she could find, the *Albion*. It left the city a few days later. When it neared the coast of Ireland, however, it encountered a terrible storm. The shipwreck was reported in an Irish newspaper:

> The *Albion* . . . was one of the finest class ships between Liverpool and New York. . . . Her loss was attended with circumstances of a peculiarly affecting nature. She had lived out the tremendous gale of the entire day. . . and Captain Williams consoled the passengers at eight o'clock in the evening, with the hope of being able to reach Liverpool . . . which cheering expectation induced almost all the passengers, particularly the females, to retire to rest. In some short time, however, a violent squall came on, which in a moment carried away the masts, and, there being no possibility of disengaging them from the rigging, encumbered the hull so that she became unmanageable and drifted at the mercy of the waves . . . The captain told the sad news to the passengers that there was no longer any hope; soon after she struck. From thenceforward all was distress and confusion. The vessel soon after went to pieces.
>
> [Cork *Southern Reporter,* 1822 May ??]

A supposed witness continued the dramatic tale with this report:

> The Albion struck on a rock . . . some distance from the shore, and then was driven in close to the cliffs. . . . A woman was seen standing in the wind and she had one hand raised aloft with a purse "of gold" which she offered to anyone who could save her life. . . . In a very short time . . . [the ship] came close to the shore, the woman was knocked down by a wave and swept overboard and was no more seen until her body was recovered. . . . It was identified as that of Miss Anne Powell.

Her father, William Dummer Powell, was at the time in England. When he first received news of the scandalous circumstances of his daughter's sudden departure from York, he swore he would not see her. "She is of age," he wrote of his wife, "and I am bound to provide for her no longer." But his fatherly heart softened. He made provisions for lodgings for her in London and was on his way to Liverpool to meet her when the dreadful tidings came.

Judge Powell made a full enquiry of the owners and survivors of the crew into the full circumstances of the shipwreck. They showed him a brooch, found pinned to Anne's dress. He recognized it and brought it home. Before returning to Canada, the old man commissioned a stone for Anne's grave in the village of

Anne's rival: Emma Robinson with her daughter Mary. The three Robinson daughters are featured on the cover of this issue.

Garretstown in County Cork and a memorial tablet to be erected in the local church. It bears this inscription:

> Anne Powell, Spinster,
> was a passenger in the ship *Albion* (wrecked
> on this coast in the 22nd April, 1822),
> and perished with many others,
> but her body being recovered from the sea,
> received from the charity of strangers Christian
> burial in the cemetery of this Church; in grateful
> memory whereof this marble is inscribed by
> W.D.P.

Chris Raible is a Toronto writer. His most recent contribution to "The Beaver" was "In Sable Garments of Mourning", a story of cholera in pre-Confederation Toronto (April/May 1992). Raible is the author of "Muddy York Mud: Scandal and Scurrility in Upper Canada", to be published in 1993 under his own imprint, Curiosity House.

Go West Young Woman

By DAVE McINTOSH

Imagine! More than a century ago a Canadian corporation — probably *the* Canadian corporation —sought out the views of women on a subject far from exclusively female.

The Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886 published the results of its survey in a 50-page pamphlet called *What Women Say of the Canadian North West*. A questionnaire had been sent the previous fall to some 400 women in Manitoba, Assiniboia, Athabasca, Saskatchewan and Alberta for whom it could find accurate addresses.

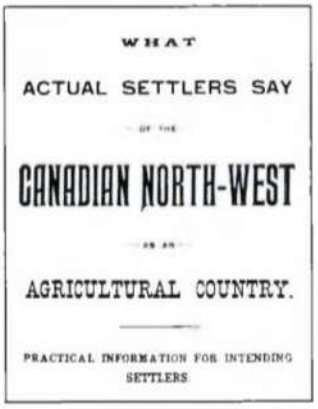
The survey was hardly altruistic, of course. The CPR had land for sale — a belt 48 miles wide, 24 miles on either side of its main line. Prices started at $2.50 an acre, one-tenth down and nine more years to pay, interest six per cent annually.

Competition for settlers was fierce: within the British Empire; between the U.S. mid-western states and Manitoba and the Canadian Western territories waiting to be provinces; among the territories themselves; and among communities surrounding the larger settlements. A favourite method of boosting your own land was to run down the opposition. An 1884 Canadian pamphlet dismissed South Africa, Australia and New Zealand as unsuitable for settlers. The comment about New Zealand was that its native Maoris had been cannibals "and they still show that the old nature is not quite dead in them." Australia had drought and "some of the world's deadliest snakes."

On the other hand, Ottawa became incensed over one paragraph in an American settlers' guide which said Manitoba had seven months of Arctic winter and five months of cold weather. It issued a 32-page pamphlet entitled *Canadian North-West, Climate and Productions. A Misrepresentation Exposed.*

Pamphleteering by government and private agencies as a means to attract immigrants had been going on since 1622 when Capt. Richard Whitbourne published his discourse on Newfoundland. In 1879, J.H. Pope, Canadian agriculture minister, decided to encourage immigration by bringing British farmers to Canada to see for themselves whether Western land would suit their needs and those of their agricultural colleagues back home. These delegates reported verbally to their farm associations and wrote reports which the Canadian government published and circulated. Meanwhile, many Ontario farmers were moving west.

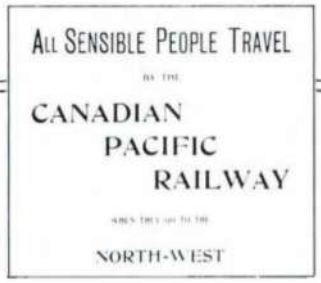
The CPR turned out a steady stream of brochures on agriculture with titles such as *Dairy Farming and Ranching, The North-West Farmer in Manitoba, Assiniboia, Alberta; The Manitoba Land Folder, A Scotch Farmer's Success* and *100 Farmers Testify*. But its most unusual, and perhaps unique, offering was *What Women Say*. Certainly the Canadian government had never invited female delegates from Britain to Canada to look us over as a possible farm neighbour.


WHAT
ACTUAL SETTLERS SAY
OF THE
CANADIAN NORTH-WEST
AS AN
AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY.
PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR INTENDING SETTLERS

The railway did not get (or did not print, anyway) many discouraging words in response to its questionnaire about Western life. But the resulting pamphlet went directly at a lot of down-to-earth subjects and thus stands today as a revealing social document. The consensus seemed to be that things were pretty tough on arrival but that hard work brought good crops and comfort.

On basics, the consensus was: bring lots of warm woollen underclothing, for child, woman and man. And garden seeds.

Questions ranged broadly from what advice you would proffer newcomers to whether you had any dread of Indians. There were 320 replies to the latter question. Only two expressed any anxiety at all; the others said, for example, "Certainly not, the Indians were kind and civil"; "Poor things, no;" and "No, no, no." The 1885 North-West Rebellion had only just been



put down, though far to the west of the Manitoba farms of most of the respondents.

A general view was that families should accompany the immigrant husband and father, particularly if there was enough money to board in town until Dad had the first dwelling up — or found a farm job to learn farming. Mrs. Helen Bell of Burnside wrote: "I would recommend the wife and family to come with the father. I and eight children came with my husband."

"By all means," replied Mrs. Lavinia Jeffery of Minnedosa. "We already have too many bachelors."

A shortage of women — or surplus of men — was a constant theme of the pamphlet. Young women were needed as domestic servants, farm workers, boarding-house and hotel cooks and chambermaids, milliners and seamstresses. Pay was good; dairymaids and housemaids, $10 to $15 a month, plus board; an experienced hotel cook, $100 a month or more; a "sewing girl", $1 a day with board. There was a placement service in Winnipeg called "The Girls' Friendly Society".

Farm wives who could afford domestic help after a few days despaired of ever keeping any female helper for any length of time. As Mrs. I. Sutherland of East Kildonan, Manitoba, said: "The country being overrun with bachelors, no one can hope to keep a girl more than a few months, and in many cases but a few weeks, when she is married and away."

Mrs. F. Robbie of Birtle, Manitoba, put it this way: "There are lots of well-to-do bachelors who are wanting wives, and good, honest, hardworking girls can soon find homes of their own."

From her home near Regina, Mrs. T.F. Purdy wrote: "Schools are scarce on account of there being so many bachelors in this part."

The pamphlet contained a lot of solid information on prices. For instance, Mrs. A. Bethune of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, reported that the town had six stores. Sugar and tea were the same price: $1.04 for 16 pounds. Flour was $2.08 for a 100-pound bag. Mrs. R.P. Thompson of Miami, Manitoba, said her nine cows brought in 20 cents a pound for butter and 14 cents for cheese in Winnipeg. The usual price for eggs was two cents each.

Had the women experienced any hardships? Well, nothing to speak of, they said.

Mrs. E. Broadguest of Turtle Mountain, Manitoba: "We had a little inconvenience the first season coming in as there were no bridges on the rivers or creeks, nor even ferry boats."

Mrs. S.J. Batcock of Orange Ridge, NWT: "We had then to go 100 miles for our provisions. We now have the railway and market within a day's journey."

Mrs. J.W. Parker of Blythefield, NWT, dismissed the whole idea of hardships: "No Canadians have difficulty in accommodating themselves to any circumstances."

Mrs. H. Proctor of Woodland, NWT, in contrast to the few women who complained of isolation, wrote: "We have friends all around by showing ourselves friendly."

There were some sighs about the hard winters, but Mrs. M. McKay of Wapella, Assiniboia, said: "The winter is cold, but not as hard to endure as the cold of poverty."

Advice to newcomers ranged far and wide but a general theme was: don't put on English (or Ontario) airs and don't be too proud to ask for help.

On the more practical side Mrs. A.B. Harris of Beulah, NWT, commented: "The husband should emigrate first and build a warm house and dig a well. A cold house and no water when it is wanted will make a smiling face look sour and make her a grumbler."

Mrs. R.H. Smith of Ninette, Manitoba: "A family should get cow, pig and hens at once."

Mrs. C.C. Glitten of Bird's Hill, Manitoba: "Make a point of setting out raspberries, currants and strawberries as soon as possible."

Mrs. J.N. Davidson of Rapid City, Manitoba: "Bring sufficient good sense to avoid all romantic ideas of accepting the first offer of marriage on arriving here; also frivolous notions about dress, reading novels, and the like."

Mrs. Mary Lowe of Ste Agathe, Manitoba: "Smart clean girls can do better here than men."

Mrs. N. McGregor of Dalton, NWT: "There are plenty of fine single men in this part to keep you smiling all the time."

The advice included the ultimate prairie blasphemy for the time, one that is, perhaps, current again. Mrs. S.J. Wheatland of Donore, NWT, wrote: "We have had several bad seasons. I would recommend mixed farming. I do not trust to grain."

By design or accident, one male reply made its way into the pamphlet. John Pollock of Wolf Creek, NWT, said: "If you have any young girls in your country who would like to start housekeeping, this is the place to come. There are lots of young men who want housekeepers. I would like to give over the job of washing the dishes myself."

The cad did not even mention marriage. ♦

Dave McIntosh is an Ottawa writer. He edited and annotated "High Blue Battle", the World War II battle diary of the RCAF's No. 1 (401) Fighter Squadron. It was published by Stoddart in 1990.

Our Men in Moscow

Canadian Diplomats behind the Iron Curtain

By Frederick J. McEvoy

The collapse of communism has occurred with dizzying speed. Already the Cold War seems a part of history, yet for some forty years following World War II relations between the West and the Soviet bloc were the dominant factor on the international stage. For Canadian diplomats serving behind the Iron Curtain in the early Cold War years life was difficult and frustrating, but nevertheless a fascinating experience not to be regretted.

Even up to the beginning of World War II Canada's foreign service was very much in its infancy, with but seven posts abroad.

Canada's wartime involvement necessitated a strengthening of this presence, particularly in Allied countries. These included the Soviet Union, which underwent a metamorphosis from "communist menace" to "gallant ally" in the struggle against Hitler.

While Canada had to this point no formal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, commercial considerations had resulted in the appointment of a trade commissioner in pre-revolutionary Russia as far back as 1916. Dana Wilgress served in that capacity in Siberia until 1919, marrying a Russian woman before returning to Canada. His experience made him the obvious choice as the first minister (later ambassador) to the Soviet Union in 1942, by which time he had risen to be Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce.

The bulk of his term in the Soviet Union coincided with the high point of Canadian-Soviet relations; his successors were not to be so fortunate. Relations between the Soviets and the West began to deteriorate in the immediate postwar period. In September 1945 the defection of Igor Gouzenko, a cypher clerk at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, revealed to Western governments the existence of an elaborate Soviet spy-ring. When the matter became public early in 1946, the Cold War was on in earnest.

The Canadians in Moscow, Wilgress wrote in his memoirs, were quick to notice a chill in the air: "we could sense a distinct cooling off in relations. During the war I had felt myself at the very top in Soviet esteem, ranking just after the British and American ambassadors. Now, I had fallen to the very bottom. No longer was I singled out at official receptions for special attention . . . there was a reserved attitude adopted towards representatives of the countries that had been allied with the Soviet Union during the war. All of this made attendance at social functions much less pleasant than formerly. I could feel that my days of usefulness as Ambassador to the Soviet Union were over . . ." He left shortly after, not to be replaced as ambassador until the fifties. The mission was left under the leadership of a series of chargés d'affaires.

The first repercussion was a doubling of the guard around the embassy compound to, as then military attaché Jean Allard describes it, "four of these guardian angels." When he went for a walk he was followed by two of them. Allard had arrived in Russia shortly before this. His first impression on reaching Leningrad was of Soviet secret police "patrolling the railway station with mounted bayonets. I had the feeling that I was entering a concentration camp." It was a sign of things to come.

Robert Ford became one of the most distinguished and longest-serving Western diplomats in Moscow, Canadian ambassador spanning the years from Khrushchev to Gorbachev. In the fall of 1946 he was a young second secretary beginning his long acquaintanceship with Russia. The Soviet Union of that time, he wrote in his memoirs, "was an uncomfortable place to be — uncomfortable physically, emotionally, and politically." Like the majority of diplomats, the Canadians were crowded into a small embassy compound, originally built in the late nineteenth century by a wealthy mercantile family. As was customary, "more attention had been paid to elaborate reception rooms than bedrooms and the comforts we would consider normal."

It was located on a "narrow, cobble-stoned street" in the Arbat, "an old but centrally located district

TORONTO DAILY STAR

40 TO 50 HELD IN SPY CASE RUSSIA NAMED BY MINISTER

FEDERAL CIVIL SERVANTS RESEARCH MEN ACCUSED

HOME AND SPORT EDITION

SPY HUNT MAY SPREAD TO WASHINGTON-REPOR

PRIME MINISTER TOUCHES OFF SENSATIONAL INTRIGUE STORY

BEVIN CLASHES WITH VISHINSKY OVER LEVANT

Claims 1,700 Soviet Spies in Canada, U.S.

POLISH THREAT TO YUGOSLAVIA SEEN BY RUSSIA

The former "comrades-in-arms" feeling between Russians and Canadians came to an abrupt end when news of the Gouzenko spy case broke in Ottawa in February 1946.

which still had preserved some of its pre-revolutionary charm." The street's extremely long Russian name translated as "Old Stables Lane." A stroll around the area would reveal to any Canadian feeling particularly hard done by how poorly the Russians lived, even those who were comparatively well off.

The ambassador's suite was on the top floor of the building, offices and a flat shared by the second and third secretaries and their wives on the ground floor, while a building in the courtyard housed the military attaché, his sergeant and the clerical staff. Vegetables were grown in the garden with part of the garage serving as storage for potatoes, cabbages and turnips over the winter.

Food rations were quite basic and hard to supplement by imports from abroad; in fact, diplomats posted for a two-year term tried to bring in everything they would need for that period, since it was so difficult to obtain supplies from outside or in Moscow, where shortages were acute. Bob Phillips, who was a young officer on his first posting at this time, left Moscow thirty pounds below his normal weight. On one occasion, while sailing down the Volga, he and his wife bought a loaf of sour black bread for the equivalent of $17, and were glad to get it. The local staff, he recalls, were incompetent cooks, particularly when confronted with unfamiliar Western foods, and would do such things as boil cornflakes for half an hour before serving them. Despite these difficulties the standards of diplomatic entertaining had to be maintained.

There were other inconveniences. Embassies had to supply their own heat and were not provided with hot water. In order to take a bath it was necessary to heat water by burning wood in an old copper boiler. This was a particular problem for Phillips, a dedicated photographer. He developed his pictures in the bathtub, finding it difficult to keep the heat regulated. Things tended not to work the way they should, the phone system being a case in point. Its constant malfunctioning caused so much frustration that one user, provoked beyond endurance, tore it off the wall and had to be restrained from throwing it out the window. Much annoyance was also caused by the fact that the telephone book was a classified document. As a result people dialed numbers at random, resulting in many wrong number calls coming into the embassy. Lists of phone numbers were compiled and sold on the black market.

It was also very difficult to get simple things done. All requests had to go through Burobin, an abbreviation of the Russian title "Office for the Service to Foreigners." Neither efficiency nor promptness were

Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Canadian officials, Paris 1946. The veteran Canadian diplomat Dana Wilgress is at right, General Georges Vanier at left. Others are Deputy Minister of External Affairs Norman Robertson, cabinet minister Brooke Claxton and Privy Council Clerk Arnold Heeney.

hallmarks of Soviet bureaucracy. It was simpler for the Canadians to do as much as they could themselves. One New Year's Eve was spent smashing through a masonry wall with sledgehammers in the course of renovations. As far as possible they did their own carpentry and even made filing cabinets. On one occasion they did manage to get electricians in to fix a light; when the switch was turned on, water poured out.

Embassy staff soon discovered that it was far easier to get work done if the workmen were paid in kind — food, and especially, liquor — rather than in rubles. Although the diplomats stressed that this was a customary way of doing business in Russia, it caused some soul-searching among the bureaucrats at Treasury Board in Ottawa, who were particularly concerned with its legality. They finally agreed that services could be purchased with food or other goods, but drew the line at liquor.

The chargé d'affaires at the time, John Holmes, was not satisfied. "The fact remains, however," he wrote Ottawa, "that it is practically impossible to avoid dispensing gin to workmen. Even if it is not a straight question of payment for services, it is sometimes a question of blackmail. Last winter I was waiting for Burobin to finish my diningroom and had invited some high level guests to dinner. It was only by handing out some gin that I was able to fix an appropriate target date. In the same way I doubt very much if we could have cleared Burobin out of the Ambassador's quarters in time for the July 1st party if we had not poured a few drinks on the side. As gin is, on the whole, not very expensive when imported, I think this sort of largesse is, perhaps, a legitimate charge on the chargé d'affaires' expense allowance. As a large part of his allowance is spent in providing drinks for members of the Diplomatic Corps, there is presumably no objection on the part of the Treasury Board to his providing drinks for those who are a good deal thirstier than Ambassadors".

Despite this heartfelt plea, the board would not reverse its decision.

Despite having to deal with these kinds of day-to-day frustrations, not faced by other posts, staff were still expected to produce their share of reports. According to Bob Phillips, during his time in Moscow it was a heavy workload for a very small mission. With the ambassador gone there were only two officers, himself and the chargé d'affaires. Counting the clerical staff, the number of Canadians totalled about nine. By contrast, the British numbered about 100, the Americans about 150.

Phillips had been posted to Russia on three weeks' notice, a common practice in the hectic postwar years of rapid expansion for External Affairs, with no opportunity to learn the language before he left. He managed to swot up the Cyrillic alphabet while waiting in the airport in East Berlin. He began his day at 5:30 or 6:00, studying Russian before breakfast, with a formal Russian lesson between five and six in the afternoon. Phillips was reponsible for the economic reporting and shared political reporting with the chargé, who also covered international relations. Phillips also served as vice-consul and ran the embassy administration. His wife was pressed into service as well, being paid $500 to manage the embassy's inventory and run the reference and clipping library. It was a hectic life, his day filled with work and representational functions, usually followed by attendance at an evening function or a social event. Constant socializing could play havoc with the liver; when he was stricken with an attack of jaundice he discovered one beneficial side effect: it gave him an excuse to refuse alcohol.

The difficulties caused by Soviet inefficiency and the lack of accustomed amenities were an annoyance; more disconcerting was the deliberate campaign the authorities undertook to harass and isolate Western diplomats. Writing to External Affairs Under-secretary Lester B. Pearson in June 1947, Ford described the "present atmosphere of frustration and isolation which exists in Moscow and which extends not only to us but to every other foreign mission." Increasing restrictions

Lester B. Pearson chats with Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin (known then as B & K) during a visit to Moscow in the late 1950s.

were being placed on foreigners and barriers erected between them and the Russian people. Ford saw this as "a manifestation of a tendency towards the complete elimination of all Western influences and ideas, except those which can in some way be utilized by the Kremlin."

Writing in January 1948 John Holmes, Ford's successor as chargé, described the situation as a "war of nerves" being waged against Western diplomats. A member of the British embassy had just been declared *persona non grata*, presumably because he had too many Russian friends. "All diplomats," he reported, "are aware that good conduct does not ensure their immunity from incidents; it is a question of waiting for the axe to fall." It was easy for the Soviets to trump up a case against a diplomat because they had no regard for the possession of actual evidence. This was brought home to the Canadians the following September when an attempt was made to ensnare Bob Phillips. He received a call from a woman named Vera who claimed to work for the Ministry of Oil and wanted to set up a meeting with him. This clumsy approach was easily seen through.

It was an extremely unpleasant atmosphere for Westerners. As Phillips noted in February 1948, "the attitude towards, and the treatment of foreigners seems to become harsher week by week. . . . Now the campaign, if such it is, has reached its highest pitch so far." Such "psychopathic suspicion of foreigners" was not new to Russia, Holmes felt, but had been worsened by Soviet propaganda and the paranoia inherent in Stalinism. The absurdities that could be reached were epitomized in April when the Soviets refused embassies direct contact with the organization that was responsible for cultural relations with foreign countries, an edict that Holmes classified as a "delightful" paradox.

Not so delightful was the treatment of Russians who worked for foreign embassies. As Phillips reported to Ottawa in May, "some casual workers whom we employ in the Embassy have been warned not to darken our doors again, and the pressure on our domestic staff has been increased. The arrests of employees of foreign missions had been stepped up to the point where we began to wonder if those who still remained with us were all disciples of Mata Hari."

It was difficult to avoid being at least a little paranoid. It was a known fact that the local staff were required to report to the police and that the embassy was thoroughly bugged. On one occasion, when the Phillipses returned unexpectedly early from a social engagement, they heard an intruder in the attic. He escaped, but had obviously been there to plant listening devices. As a matter of ordinary security, any sensitive topics would be discussed outside in the garden, not in the embassy building. It was no wonder that Phillips wrote, concerning his approach by Vera, "perhaps it was just another caller, and perhaps I am suffering from an overdose of suspicion. It is a common ailment among residents of this city."

This official unpleasantness was lightened to some extent by the reaction of ordinary Russians encountered during the course of normal activities, for contact could not be cut off entirely. Holmes never felt that "the people in the streets or in the theatre were hostile. There is never even an angry glance at the Embassy car, flag flying and unmistakeably foreign, when the driver . . . scatters old ladies, babies, Red Army generals, and perambulators off their own streets." Phillips agreed. "We have never been insulted in the streets," he wrote. "Despite the improvement in local clothing, we still always stand out like sore thumbs in any crowd of Muscovites. Our presence results in far more interest . . . than in expressed antipathy."

The government policy made it difficult for the diplomats to do their job in the accustomed manner. Cut off from all but the barest contacts with Soviet officialdom, reporting became little more than informed

speculation based on a careful reading of the official press, hoping to notice subtle changes in the party line. Sometimes success was achieved, as was the case with the rupture in relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, predicted by the embassy before it was really apparent. As one officer with experience of serving in Moscow put it, "Every comma must be noted, and the process becomes a form of textual criticism more closely related to the labours of Shakespearian or Biblical scholars than to those of press observers in the West. . . . Nothing seems obvious any more, so that conclusions must be held in the tentative stage longer than normal while the problem is probed and discussed far into the night with one's Western colleagues."

As this description indicates, other diplomats and the Moscow press corps became prime sources of information. The missions from Commonwealth countries in particular made a point of sharing information or comparing notes, while members of the press corps often had far better contacts than the diplomats could acquire.

John Watkins, following a two year term as chargé d'affaires, felt that his time in Moscow was "barely enough to scratch the surface. The impressions so acquired are inevitably superficial and often, no doubt, misleading. The Kremlin divulges none of its secrets to the diplomatic corps. Attempts to divine them are less confident in Moscow than in the Western press. A few of the foreign specialists on Soviet affairs in Moscow develop a kind of sixth sense which enables them to extract a good deal of information from the atmosphere but experience has taught them to be undogmatic in their interpretations and cautious in their predictions."

It was virtually impossible to meet Soviet intellectuals and artists. The rare acquaintanceship that was made was problematic in two ways. There was always the possibility that the new friend was working for the police; if not, caution was required so as not to get the Russian into trouble. The Phillipses, for example, became friendly with a musician from the Bolshoi orchestra. They attended concerts and dinners with him but made sure to meet only in public so as not to compromise him. Their conversations provided Phillips with material for reporting on cultural affairs.

Another source of information was people with some claim to entry to Canada, having lived there at one time or possessing relatives in Canada. Usually from Ukraine, they would come to Moscow seeking exit permits — which were never granted — staying for two or three days with the local staff in the embassy basement. Through casual questioning, information could be elicited on living conditions in areas that no foreigner had seen for many years. Such information could also be used as barter for information received from other friendly missions.

Unfortunately, this caused considerable alarm in Ottawa, where these people were considered both a security risk and an unauthorized charge on the public purse. In vain did the embassy argue the case for charity towards unfortunates who had nowhere else to go in Moscow and the value of the information they provided, otherwise unobtainable. The department would not bend. To Phillips it was a case of bureaucrats in Ottawa making rules for missions with no conception of what conditions were actually like on the ground.

Besides being isolated, Western diplomats were also subjected to deliberate harassment by the authorities. It became readily apparent that at least some of the mail coming to the embassy was being opened before delivery. Regular postal channels — as opposed to the diplomatic bag — could not be considered safe for either incoming or outgoing mail. The Soviet customs authorities insisted on examining all shipments, a major problem when food supplies managed to be secured from abroad. This procedure, the embassy reported, "seems calculated to cause a maximum of inconvenience. All crates are pried open and part of their contents removed. When the contents are damaged in this process as frequently happens, the loss is borne by the individuals owning the food and not by the customs authorities. The customs inspectors take no responsiblity for the repacking or closing of crates nor do they provide any facilities to enable this to be done."

Other problems arose in regard to the documents required by incoming diplomatic officials entering the Soviet Union, as well as their baggage. The embassy never found it easy to decide "whether to consider the ridiculous difficulties created by the Soviet authorities to be the result of Soviet bureaucracy or of calculated policy." The end effects were the same — endless negotiations with Soviet officialdom in an attempt to straighten out the situation. The embassy soon found that a discreet hint of retaliation on the part of Canada worked wonders, bringing a sudden end to an impasse that had seemed interminable. Such threats had to be used carefully, John Holmes stressed following his return to Ottawa from his stint as chargé d'affairs. "The Russians understand the game of retaliation," he wrote, "and they might strike a bargain as long as they are not asked to do so publicly, and as long as we do not make a great issue of the matter."

One area where our diplomats in Moscow clamoured for reciprocal treatment of Soviets in Canada was that of travel restrictions. Travel for the diplomatic corps was roughly restricted to an approximately 100 mile radius of Moscow, and to the city of Leningrad. There were no written regulations to that effect, but so many obstacles were put in the way of foreigners trying to travel more freely that they generally gave up in disgust. Even within the supposedly open area problems could arise, as the Fords and Phillipses discovered when

Pierre Trudeau with Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev (with medals) and Foreign Minister Gromyko, right, during a 1971 visit to the U.S.S.R. Canadian ambassador Robert Ford stands discreetly to the rear, second from left. Ford was not only a distinguished diplomat, but also a much-admired poet.

they went to visit a country house that was described in a guidebook to local places of interest. They discovered it was being used as a forced labour camp and was definitely out of bounds to foreigners. They managed to leave without incident but were shaken nonetheless. As Phillips put it, "Even to try to appreciate the Russian art to which our attention is drawn by Soviet publications apparently may involve us in trouble with the Soviet authorities."

The Phillipses were an adventurous couple and determined to test the system to see how far they could go. In June 1947 they decided to take the steamer to Gorki. When they applied through the usual official channels and met with the usual delays and obstructions, Mrs. Phillips simply went to the ticket office herself and purchased the tickets for the steamer. They met with warm and generous hospitality from the people of Gorki, even though Russians had been taught to distrust Westerners. It was a further affirmation of the lack of hostility to be found outside official circles. "We wondered at how little effect the propaganda had had on the individual in this respect," he reported. "Whatever one thinks about the form of government, in the people of the Soviet Union seems to lie every hope of the sort of friendship which the world so often despairs of achieving."

The following year, despite the deterioration in the situation for foreigners, they undertook even more far-flung travels, to Kiev in Ukraine and Tbilisi in Georgia. These were ground-breaking trips for Westerners and Phillips could justly claim that "we made something of a rent in the Iron Curtain by undertaking a week's visit to the Ukraine, despite all the efforts of Soviet officialdom to prevent us. We were the first Westerners from the Diplomatic Corps to see Kiev in two years, and perhaps the first foreigners ever to go unheralded and unchaperoned."

The Soviet authorities were obviously displeased at these wanderings but to this point were unwilling to openly state that foreigners were not allowed to travel. Intourist officials in Kiev were alarmed by their unexpected appearance but gave them accommodation, though they were not permitted to travel outside the city. In reporting to Ottawa on these expeditions, John Holmes paid due tribute to the audacity of the Phillipses and the value of their travels:

> It takes courage to set out for two nights and a day in a hard coach with no water, excessive and unclean companionship and multitudes of vermin or to wander about the Caucasus with no assurance of a bed. As a result of their journeys, however, a light has been thrown on parts of the Soviet Union which have been dark for some time. It is also all to the good, I think, that someone has challenged the attitude of the Soviet authorities on travel, as they have been

getting away with a double game advantageous only to themselves.

The boldness shown by the Phillipses greatly increased Canadian prestige in the diplomatic community and provided valuable information for barter.

It also encouraged others to emulate their achievements, and this seems to have finally pushed the Soviets over the edge. In August 1948 travel restrictions were tightened, a move Holmes thought quite possibly a response to "the outbreak of long-distance travelling on the part of members of the Canadian and United Kingdom Embassies this spring, which threatened to get out of hand." He urged Ottawa to retaliate in kind against Soviet diplomats in Canada, even going so far as to suggest the closing of Commonwealth embassies in Moscow.

This raised two perennial questions for the Department of External Affairs. Could a democratic society subject Soviet diplomats to the same kind of treatment that Western diplomats received in Moscow, and was the maintenance of an embassy in the Soviet Union justified in light of the restrictions under which the staff had to work?

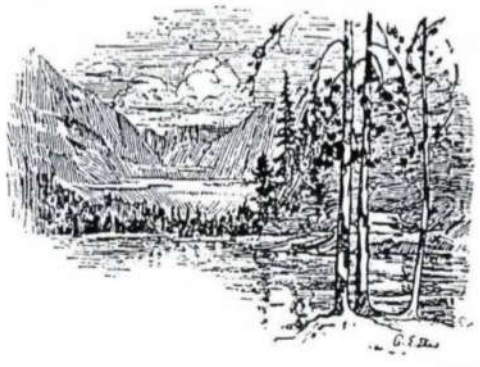
The answer to the first question was clearly no. No democratic country could conduct itself in the same manner as the Soviets without going a long way towards turning itself into a police state as well. On the second question, External Affairs believed that it was more important to maintain a relationship, however testy, with the Soviets than to divide the world into two completely isolated camps. "Should the opportunity present itself to breach the 'Iron Curtain' at any weak point," a departmental memorandum of October 1948 stressed, "we shall not be there to play our part, nor will we be able, in the face of such an opportunity, suddenly to reverse our policy." Larger geopolitical considerations demanded that Canadian diplomats in Moscow grit their teeth and bear it.

This was not a closed question, and from time to time it arose again, but always with the same result — the embassy in Moscow was judged too valuable to be withdrawn despite the restrictions it laboured under. One veteran of Iron Curtain postings, J.A. McCordick, emphasized in February 1950 the importance of developing a "cadre of specialists who know the enemy as well as he can be known in present circumstances." Actual service behind the Curtain was indispensable, allowing the officer to "absorb a great deal of useful — not exactly information — but rather comprehension. It is a process which might be called 'spiritual osmosis', a trans-membranous seepage of 'feel' and 'intuition' into the brain."

Other reasons were also adduced by the department. It was essential to have first-hand reports on conditions and developments in the Soviet Union. Knowledge gained in this way helped Canadian delegations dealing with the Soviets at the United Nations and international conferences. The embassy was able to present the views of the government directly to Soviet authorities. It also co-operated with other Western missions in exchanging information and in presenting a collective Western diplomatic front. Canada's allies, particularly the United States, would not look kindly on a Canadian withdrawal from Moscow. On the whole, then, the benefits of having an embassy there far outweighed the drawbacks, regardless of how low relations between the Soviets and the West might sink. Canadian diplomats in Moscow were on the front line of the Cold War, and would have to accept the discomforts any front line soldier faced.

Despite these discomforts, those who served in Moscow during this dawn of the cold war relished the experience. To John Holmes, to be there was to be near the heart of the mystery that was the Soviet Union. To Bob Phillips it was a time of enormous excitement and challenge, a fascinating and enviable period of his life. For Robert Ford life there was "very difficult materially, and even more of a strain psychologically." He particularly deplored the "agonizing atmosphere of increasingly open and brutal oppression by Stalin against his own people." Yet as a Canadian he felt a certain kinship with the Russian people. "In some ways," he wrote in his memoirs, "Canadians found it easier to adapt to life in Russia than many other foreigners. The vastness of the country . . . and the long, hard winters did not bother us. The landscape of Old Russia was jarringly similar to that of Ontario and Quebec and living and surviving in our harsh northern climate gave us a certain feeling of sympathy for Russians, so dissimilar to us in other respects." ♦

Frederick J. McEvoy's article "Diplomats at War" appeared in the October/November 1990 issue of "The Beaver". Mr. McEvoy lives in Gloucester, Ontario.



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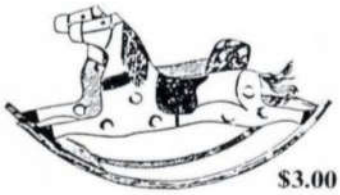

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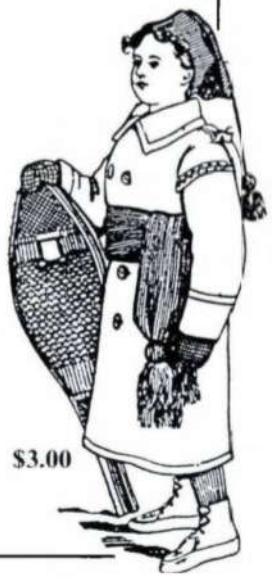

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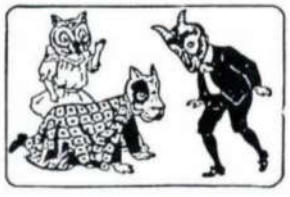

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Hearts of Oak on the Lakes

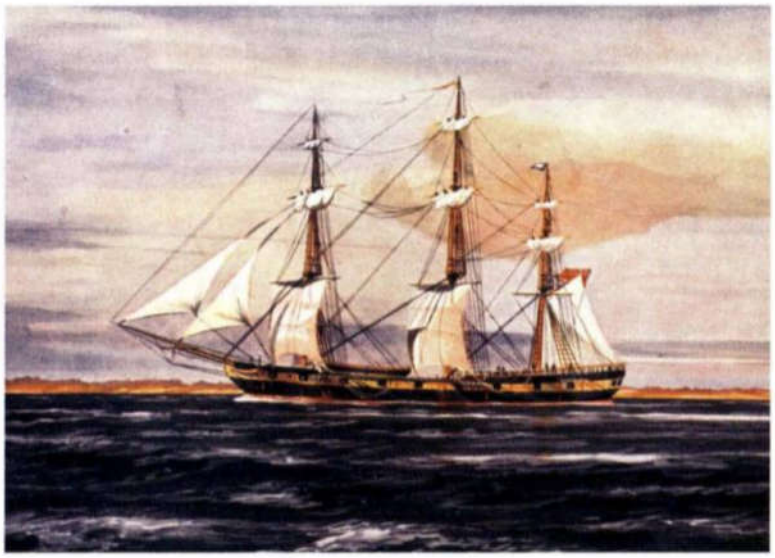
By Robert Malcomson

WAR ON THE GREAT LAKES
Essays Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie

Edited by William Jeffery Welsh and David Curtis Skaggs. The Kent State University Press, Kent, 1991. 154 pp. $29.00 hardcover; $17.50 paper.

If some historians are to be believed, the conflicts on the Great Lakes during the 1812 War constituted little more than a "rowboat" war. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The lakes were essential highways for transporting armies and the huge volumes of materiel they needed. As a result, the British and Americans expanded their naval contingents and enthusiastically sought to establish dominance on each separate waterway. These struggles were integral aspects of each year's campaign and influenced the outcome just as significantly as the land battles did.

Editors William J. Welsh and David C. Skaggs have made an excellent effort to enrich the historiography of the Great Lakes war by compiling the papers that make up *War on the Great Lakes*. Although the book's title suggests that the whole war is addressed, the focus in this text is the 10 September 1813 battle near Put-in-Bay in which Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry's squadron captured the six-vessel British flotilla under Commander Robert Heriot Barclay and thereby won control of Lake Erie. Perry's singular victory has received more attention from writers than any of the other naval events on the lakes, but much remains to be explored regarding the battle and its significance within the context of the larger war effort. Welsh and Skaggs attempt to fill this gap by packaging eleven articles that were



HMS "Detroit", Barclay's flagship.

presented at the "War on the Great Lakes Symposium", held at Windsor, Ontario and Put-in-Bay, Ohio during September 1988.

The book opens with a compelling narrative by Gerald Altoff, historian and chief ranger for the U.S. National Park Service at Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial at Put-in-Bay. From all the many accounts of the battle, Altoff assembles the events and adds to them a strong sense of reality. We see the "exhausted and mentally stunned sailors", hear Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry's boot heels rapping "a steady tattoo" as he paces the deck and are reminded that real people, who lived and breathed, felt fear and confusion, manned the warships.

The reader next encounters an exhaustive investigation of the influences that ordnance had upon the course of the battle. With precision Frederick Drake examines the nature of the batteries aboard the American and British squadrons and casts aside the notion that weight of metal alone is a suitable means for comparing the opposing forces. Given the disparity in the nature of the fire power of the two squadrons, Drake asserts, the British should have avoided a close-in action with Perry. Since circumstances forced Commander Barclay into battle, he might have been better off to put all of his men in his three strongest vessels and to engage Perry in a running fight.

The character of Robert Barclay is discussed by W.A.B. Douglas, who also sheds some light on several other members of the British naval establishment. Unfortunately, little new material is presented in the Douglas paper; it is, rather, a basic review of well-known literature. Some fresh insights may be found in a pair of articles that look away from the warships to examine circumstances that existed before and after the battle. R. David Edmunds explores

the relationships among the native peoples who supported the British. Generally, Tecumseh has been the principal Indian leader connected with these events. Edmunds points out that Tecumseh's brother, known as The Prophet, and other chiefs, namely Main Poc of the Potawatomis, Roundhead and Walk-in-the-Water, were involved in the many different confrontations and coalitions that evolved during the war. Edmunds' article illuminates these figures, offering a number of enticing leads for further study. In a similar manner Dennis Carter-Edwards details the events that followed Barclay's defeat and the subsequent American victory at Moraviantown over the army of British General Henry Procter. The Americans who occupied the territory into 1814 experienced problems similar to those that weakened Barclay and Procter and, as might be expected, the British citizens who did not flee the area after the invasion suffered hardships during the occupation. Furthermore, Carter-Edwards suggests, since the British barely contested control of their lost land, the overall effect of Perry's victory was negligible.

A key objective of the anniversary symposium was "to provide a look at the possibilities of new research opportunities." To pursue this goal Ian Pemberton examines the manner in which Canadians have covered the issue, while Christopher McKee summarizes the work of American authorities. Both authors conclude that much remains to be learned about the battle and its place in the western campaign. To assist the armchair historian or the serious researcher in their quest to investigate some of these unanswered questions, the final three contributions in the text list and describe materials to be found in Canadian and American archives, libraries and private collections. Combined with the informative endnotes of the other articles, these references form a concise finder's guide for material relevant to this topic.

War on the Great Lakes would make a very worthwhile addition to the shelf of any student of the 1812 War. Its articles are at first informative, then thought-provoking, and, finally, helpful in pointing the directions in which further inquiries may be made. The editorial efforts of Welsh and Skaggs have produced a laudable addition to the War of 1812 historiography.

Robert Malcomson is the co-author of "HMS Detroit: The Battle for Lake Erie" and a past contributor to "The Beaver".

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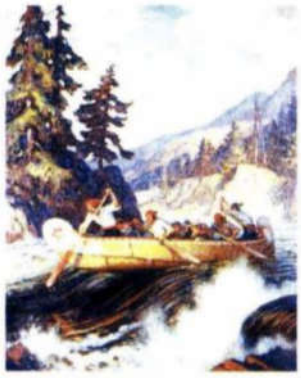

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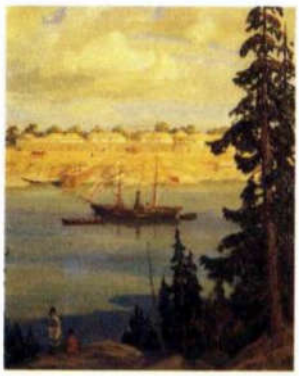

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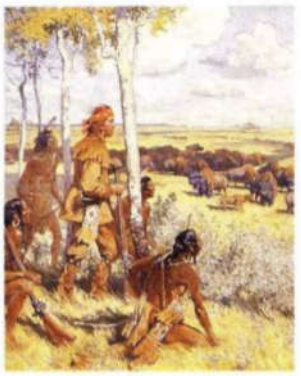

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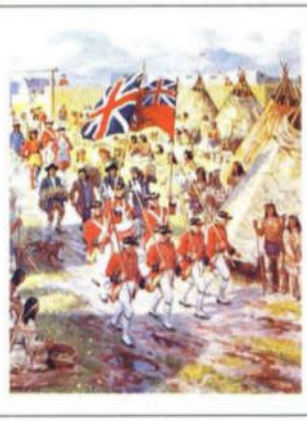

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Defending New France

By Ian McCulloch

THE GOOD REGIMENT
The Carignan-Salieres Regiment in Canada, 1665-1668

By Jack Verney. McGill/Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 1991. 222 pp., illus. $34.95.

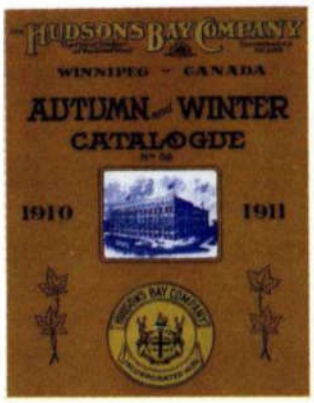
Death lurked behind every tree in 1664 and the habitants of fledgling New France were on the verge of a collective nervous breakdown. The Iroquois were on the warpath.

"Don't despair!" was the message from the mother country. Colbert, Louis XIV's Minister of Finance, wrote to Bishop Laval that "His Majesty has resolved to send a good regiment of infantry to Canada . . . in order to destroy those [Iroquois] barbarians completely!"

That "good regiment" was the Carignan-Salieres, the subject of Jack Verney's new and highly recommended book. Immaculately-researched, Professor Emeritus W.J. Eccles of the University of Toronto is on record as saying that "it is the only sound work on the subject, the scholarship scrupulous". But that shouldn't scare casual readers off, for it is a rousing good read whether you are a military history buff or a simple lover of Canadian history.

Some might question how the three-year tenure of an infantry unit in New France is significant enough to warrant an entire book, but the Carignan-Salieres' debut on the North American stage was no cameo appearance. While they fought no major battles against the Iroquois, their two overland expeditions to the Mohawk River and subsequent garrison duties around Montreal and Trois Rivieres were sufficient to make them a major deterrent. Their

GIFTS FROM THE PAST



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brief presence secured peace with the Six Nations for nearly 20 years, during which the habitant population swelled from 3,000 to about 10,000. A tenuous French toehold in the New World became a well-established colony with an infrastructure of roads, forts and fortified towns.

Verney also notes that the regiment's deployment was a major feat of logistics and organizational control for a continental power like France — a seventeenth-century version of the scope and magnitude witnessed in the U.S. deployment to the Gulf. But Verney is more interested in the men of the regiment — putting a human face to the Carignan-Salieres.

Through the passage of time, and what historian Mason Wade has called "the golden haze of glorious [French-Canadian] legend", the true story of the regiment's exploits and contribution to New France has been distorted. Like a good investigative reporter, Verney has tapped unused sources of material on both sides of the Atlantic and come up with the detail of the regiment's activities in France prior to their move, during their deployment, and throughout their stay in Canada.

Verney examines the early writings on the regiment before launching on his own version of events. The accounts of Marie de L'Incarnation whose idealized version of the soldiers as saviours has been used by a succession of French Canadian historians culminating with the redoubtable Lionel Groulx are quickly laid to rest. Verney reveals that, contrary to legend, the men of the Carignan-Salieres were ordinary "fantassins" with their share of sinners and saints. He records that their extracurricular activities included counterfeiting, rape, adultery, gambling, theft and murder. Commenting on the soldiers' conduct, a contemporary Jesuit, Father Etienne de Carheil, was more blunt:

> Since they have come here we have only seen universal corruption which they have spread by their scandalous conduct!

Verney is a good storyteller. From the moment members of "The Good Regiment" troop down the gangways of their transport ships at Quebec in 1665, dressed in their conspicuous uniforms of broad black hats, buff-coloured coats, and mauve stockings, through to the gruelling military expeditions into Iroquois country, the reader is with the regiment every step of the way. We meet characters like the Marquis de Tracy, the new governor, who sails over with the first contingent of the Carignan-Salieres in June 1665; the jealous regimental commander, Colonel Henri de Chastelard de Salieres, nose out of joint because he is not in full control of his own regiment; Private Jean Pradez paralyzed in one leg during a vicious winter only to be miraculously "cured" at the Ste. Anne-de-Beaupré shrine. The book has the added bonus of detailed annexes on the equipment and weaponry of the regiment. Another annex (fascinating for anyone interested in genealogy) provides a collection of muster rolls listing the particulars of those soldiers who elected to stay behind in New France as settlers.

On the regiment's recall, some 400 officers and men took their discharge in Canada as part of an elaborate soldier-settlement scheme put forward by the Intendant, Jean Talon. He convinced King Louis XIV that the colony should be divided into fiefs or seigneuries, each to be granted, as far as possible, to men of military background. Size of the land would vary according to the rank and length of service of the applicants. The officers of the Carignan-Salieres received vast tracts of land in the more exposed regions around Montreal and on the Richelieu River. These officers' names are perpetuated throughout the province of Quebec to this day: Sorel, Chambly, Varennes, St. Ours, Boucherville, Contrecours, Rougement, Berthier, and others.

Verney in sum, succeeds admirably in his depiction of the Carignan-Salieres and achieves his stated aim "to reveal it for what it really was, a workaday seventeenth-century infantry unit sent to fight overseas". A retired educator who saw service with the British Army in World War II, Verney has not only captured the spirit of France's first regulars in Canada but reminds us that they "were ordinary foot soldiers, not the white knights they have been made out to be."

As a Canadian infantryman, I found myself reflecting on how very little difference there is between my soldiers and the musketeers and grenadiers of Colonel Salieres' day. While the weapons of war have changed drastically since the days of the matchlock, the soldiers who wield them have changed, like mankind, remarkably little. This, then, is the appeal of *The Good Regiment*. The Carignan-Salieres are no longer tools of historians to perpetuate a "golden haze" of legend, but real soldiers with their own page of history.

Major Ian McCulloch is a serving officer with the Royal Canadian Regiment. He lives at St-Hubert Quebec. His article on Montcalm's army at Quebec appeared in the October/November issue of "The Beaver".

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Letters, Notes and Opinion

Terry Beaulieu: Mystery at Fort Calgary

Archaeologists excavating the North West Mounted Police fort at Fort Calgary Historical Park have made an unexpected find. Field school students and members of the public have unearthed a building foundation while digging a previously known NWMP midden, or garbage dump. The fort was first built by the NWMP in 1875 where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet in present-day downtown Calgary.

The footing is "the most important feature " so far uncovered during this excavation, according to project director Gerry Oetelaar of the University of Calgary.

"It is a relatively small building," says Oetelaar, "measuring 14 feet by 14 feet exterior dimensions". Despite the small size, however, the footing is quite substantial. It was constructed of sandstone blocks and has two-foot-thick walls.

"The immediate reaction," he adds, "is that it is probably a magazine, a place where people stored ammunition." The problem with this idea is that historical records indicate the NWMP at Fort Calgary did not have a magazine. Repeated requests for funds to build one were turned down.

The building may have been a boiler house. Records indicate there was a boiler house fairly close to the unearthed footing. According to the records, though, the building did not have a foundation, and certainly nothing as substantial as a two-foot-thick sandstone one.

Oetelaar believes the most likely explanation is the footing was intended as a magazine but was later converted into a boiler house.

In 1889 a new men's barracks was constructed at the fort. The old wooden structure was replaced by a more substantial building with a sandstone foundation. Oetelaar thinks the Calgary NWMP may have decided to construct a magazine on their own at this time.

At about the same time, the root house they were using as a boiler house burned down when the roof caught fire. Instead of starting from scratch, Oetelaar believes the NWMP may have just used the magazine they had started to build as a foundation and erected the new boiler house on top of it.

In the summer of 1992 during the second season of the field school, another unexpected find was unearthed. Under the east wall of the old fort, four feet below the original ground level, a group of stones was uncovered, the remains of what may have been a tipi ring.

"The river could not have deposited these stones there," says Oetelaar. There are other natural means of transporting rocks this size, he adds, "but six or seven of them in an arc is very unusual."

Despite the use of water filtration techniques on the soil to search for even the smallest of remains, no other artifacts have been uncovered in association with the rocks to add support to the tipi ring hypothesis.

"The evidence is tantalizing but not conclusive," says Oetelaar.

Terry Beaulieu of Calgary worked on the Fort Calgary dig.

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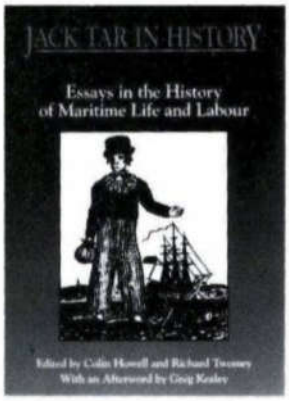

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Valour, Horror and Freedom

There was an odd event in the historical world last spring. A subcommittee of the Senate of Canada appointed itself an arbiter of historical truth and undertook its own semi-judicial inquisition into an historical documentary and how it came to be aired. Even more oddly, historical organizations watched passively, and some professional historians, whom you might expect to have a strong interest in intellectual freedom and non-coercive debate, joined in the senators' campaign.

The Senate hearings were inspired by the broadcast in January 1992 of *The Valour and the Horror*, a six-hour film in three parts about Canadians in World War II. As soon as the CBC broadcast it the producer, Brian McKenna, found himself the most controversial historical film-maker in the country.

The Valour and the Horror is an angry, opinionated film. Its three parts, one on the battle for Hong Kong in 1941, one on Bomber Command, and one on the 1944 Normandy campaign, all emphasize the daily horrors of war as experienced by ordinary young Canadians. Each episode movingly evokes the fear, carnage, and brutality of warfare, and each carries the subtext that lack of preparation for war can have terrible consequences for a small nation like Canada. But the film is also scathingly critical of political and military leaders and the callousness or incompetence that caused needless deaths among young Canadian soldiers and airmen. It also suggests that most of our historians have been, well, too polite to mention such things.

In promoting his films, McKenna spoke passionately about their tribute to the courage and self-sacrifice of young Canadians at war. When the films were aired, reviewers generally shared his attitude. But not all viewers agreed.

Many veterans were particularly offended by McKenna's second and third episodes in the series. They hated the argument that the campaign of Bomber Command, in which 10,000 young Canadians died, was both militarily and morally questionable. They were angered by allegations that in Normandy Canadians shot prisoners, that some commanders drank, that the army failed in important objectives, and that generals wasted lives by pushing their troops into badly-managed attacks. They resented the film's scrutiny of the harsh discipline meted out to men who complained or broke under the strain of war.

Though many other veterans vigorously defended *The Valour and the Horror* (some, indeed, had participated in making the film), official veterans' organizations declared the series anti-war, anti-veteran, and anti-Canadian. Soon these views were finding their way into print in reviews and letters to the editor. But one longtime campaigner for veterans' causes decided the usual kinds of discussion were insufficient.

Cliff Chadderton, chair of the National Council of Veteran Associations and head of the War Amputations of Canada, organized a national ad campaign soliciting criticism of *The Valour and the Horror*. He approached the Senate, the Canadian Radio-Television Commission, and the CBC, demanding that no further exposure to Parts Two and Three be permitted if the criticisms were upheld. Sure it's censorship, the *Toronto Star* quoted him as saying, but this is not a matter of politics or religion.

Chadderton and his coalition of veterans' organizations got a warm welcome at the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs. Its chair, Senator Jack Marshall, himself a Normandy veteran, declared that the film had caused pain to many veterans and that the Subcommittee was obliged to review the series and the role of the CBC and the National Film Board in funding its production.

The veterans and the senators soon had another ally. The film (and McKenna's publicity for it) had attacked Canadian historians for their lack of frankness about many of the issues raised. The film declares, "The true stories of these battles have never been told," and McKenna often left the impression that nothing worth reading about Canadians in the war had ever been published. Soon the historians were striking back. Professors of history joined those who lined up to denounce *The Valour and the Horror* before the Senate of Canada.

The atmosphere around the hearings in June 1992 was stormy. The Senate Opposition declared that the hearings exceeded the Senate's authority, but the subcommittee decided it needed no special authorization and went ahead. Even before they opened, the hearings had been condemned by writers, film-makers, journalists and editorialists as an attack on free inquiry and a power-play by politicians attempting to exert control over what is shown on national television.

The controversy grew hotter when critics of the hearings found that McKenna, the NFB, and the CBC would be denied a hearing at the June sittings (despite, says

McKenna, a promise to the contrary). Historians who wished to defend the films were also told to wait for some future session. "I thought it was utterly appalling," says historian Michael Bliss, one of the film's defenders who was denied a hearing in June. "They were setting out to destroy the reputation of the film and its makers without hearing the defence, with no attempt to test or question whatever was said."

Around the Senate hearing room, two fundamental questions were being argued out. Many of those denied a hearing wanted to ask what entitled the Senate to judge history and how it is shown on television. But for the senators and their allies in the room itself, the real question was whether the film was an honest, accurate, and acceptable version of history.

For the historians who testified against McKenna and his film, the second question was the important one. Reg Roy, a retired professor from the University of Victoria who has been writing about World War II most of his adult life, accepted the Senate's invitation to testify because he was "never more disappointed . . . in my life" than he was by the Normandy episode of McKenna's film. He found it biased, one-sided, and filled with innuendo. Terry Copp of Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, eagerly sought an opportunity to testify because he considered the whole film, as he told me, "not merely biased, but with a calculated, nasty disregard for getting the facts straight." John A. English of the National Defence Staff College considered the Normandy episode garbage and made statements about McKenna that he prefers not to repeat outside the Senate. Bill Carter of the University of New Brunswick thought the Bomber Command episode lacked context, failed to comprehend the issues, and had many small errors of fact.

Such criticisms delighted the senators ("it is wonderful to see historians who are truly historians"), and they repeatedly urged the witnesses to strengthen their attacks on the film's biases and inaccuracies — or simply on its existence. For Senator John Sylvain, one real problem with the film was how it might discourage military enlistments ("If you give a war and nobody comes, it is a real loss."). But in general the historians thought that testifying at a Senate hearing differed little from, say, writing a book review. "It was a scholarly criticism," says Reg Roy, and Bill Carter recalls his own session as "a scholarly, calm, rational, academic discussion." Both are satisfied that they had simply exposed the failings of the film.

Had they? Since their arguments have been widely circulated they are already under scrutiny. "The historians made the same errors they accuse the film-makers of," says Graeme Decarie of Concordia University, who had hoped to testify in June. Indeed the anomalies in the testimony are striking. Roy dismissed the idea that quarrels among generals impeded the training of Canadian troops, but English has written half a book on training failures. English testified that soldiers and experts who assisted the filmmakers were simply duped by McKenna, but one of his key examples, Roman Jarymowycz, who coauthored the Normandy script, told me he would happily work with McKenna's team again if the right project came along.

Copp declared there is "absolutely no evidence" that alcohol affected the conduct of General R.L. Keller (who is portrayed in the film by an actor holding a drink), but Roy told the senators that Keller probably drank too much, and that seems a reasonable inference from the evidence in English's book. (Indeed one may suspect that if the senators read or cared what books say, they might be as offended by some of their witnesses' works as by what McKenna said.)

On the controversial subject of psychiatric breakdown on the Normandy battlefield, Copp told the senators that "Canadians accepted the reality of breakdown and allowed individuals to regain their self-esteem working behind the lines." Yet a book he himself co-authored gives abundant evidence that, during the battles covered by the film, Canadian generals insisted on precisely the opposite policy and were "adamant that tighter discipline and exemplary punishment were required." Presumably it was the heat of the moment.

Did any of the historians who testified feel any concern about assisting the senators' campaign against *The Valour and the Horror*?

Most of them said no when I asked them. "What concerned me was the distortion of history," said Bill Carter. Reg Roy thought the whole issue a straw man. Only John English acknowledged having agonized about getting involved, but he had decided that since public money had being spent on the films, the investigation was justified.

When I asked English about the arms-length principle, which ensures that arts funding (and academic funding, for that matter) does not

lead to government control over what is said, he said, "a lot of the artsy-crafty people get very concerned about their free speech. . . ." But none of the historians opposed to the film believed there was a threat to free inquiry in the Senate's determination to investigate its funding. Terry Copp believes the campaign against the film is only about accuracy and fact-checking. "If that is chill, I am in favour of it." He declared that the slightest knowledge of Parliament made it clear there was no danger to free speech, since the senators had no power over the CBC.

Senators, however, are powerful people, capable of wielding a lot of influence in the corridors of Parliament. The CBC, the NFB, and any other organization using public funds has to be wary of their hostility whenever they approach Parliament. "I don't know how they can think that," says Graeme Decarie about the complacent attitude of Copp and the others. "Will the CBC ever again dare to do war stuff that does not toe the official line?" McKenna, for his part, thinks many academics are perfectly happy to see a chill on historical discussion in the media if it ensures that no one will trespass on their turf.

The potential influence of the senators, however, may actually reach as far as historians themselves. In their campaign against *The Valour and the Horror*, the veterans and senators expected the assistance of the Directorate of History, a section of the Department of National Defence which is responsible for writing the official histories of the Canadian forces. They did not get it: Steven Harris, the one member of the Directorate who testified, tried to provide information only and would not condemn the film. But in researching this article, I spoke to a government-employed historian, knowledgeable about the Directorate of History, who suspected that any member of it who criticized the Senate hearings would have put his or her job in jeopardy and perhaps even endangered future volumes of the official histories.

What is on trial in this controversy, in fact, is not only film but history and historians too. Talking about his film last January, Brian McKenna was dismissive of most of what has been written about Canadians and war for being complacent and less than forthright in drawing conclusions.

At the time, that seemed to me absurd. I thought not only of C.P. Stacey's official histories, but of Barry Broadfoot's *Six War Years*, Terrence Robertson's *Dieppe: The Shame and the Glory*, Mark Milner's *North Atlantic Run* and Murray Peden's *A Thousand Shall Fall* on the bomber crews.

But the sight of historians collaborating with the Senate's attack on a work that did not conform to their own notions about military history — and the absence of organizations like the Canadian Historical Association from the coalition of writers, artists, and intellectuals which condemned the hearings — seemed to many people a confirmation of McKenna's charge. Covering the controversy in *The Globe and Mail*, Stephen Godfrey wrote that the film was necessary because the official war history was "complacent and unquestioning." In fact it is not — the behaviour of the historians just made it seem that way last June.

At times, the obsession of *The Valour and the Horror* to follow in that newspaper tradition "We Name the Guilty Men!" seemed to lead it to suggest that the war would have been okay if only it had been fought properly. Even if every commander had been a military genius and a paragon of virtue, the war would still have been endlessly horrific. But anyone who can imagine sending their children off to war would want their commanders to know there would be a fierce and unforgiving scrutiny of their failings. Something like *The Valour and the Horror*, in fact.

As the deadline for this article approached late in October, the Senate still would not confirm that defenders would have a hearing in November. Certainly the new hearings were not intended simply to allow "the other side" to reply, for Terry Copp and Reg Roy had already been invited to speak again if the hearings resumed.

Terry Copp thinks that Senator Marshall has done a good job. He believes that the CBC has in fact withdrawn from funding more war documentaries by Brian McKenna. "If Copp is declaring a victory," retorts McKenna, "he's wrong again. I'll mortgage my house again if I have to."

Clearly the battle over World War II was continuing. The debate about Canadian historians and how seriously they take intellectual freedom was just beginning. ♦

Editor's Note:
The Senate hearings resumed in early November amid complaints that favour was once again being shown to anti-McKenna witnesses. On 10 November the CBC Ombudsman ruled that the series was "flawed" and would not be aired again.

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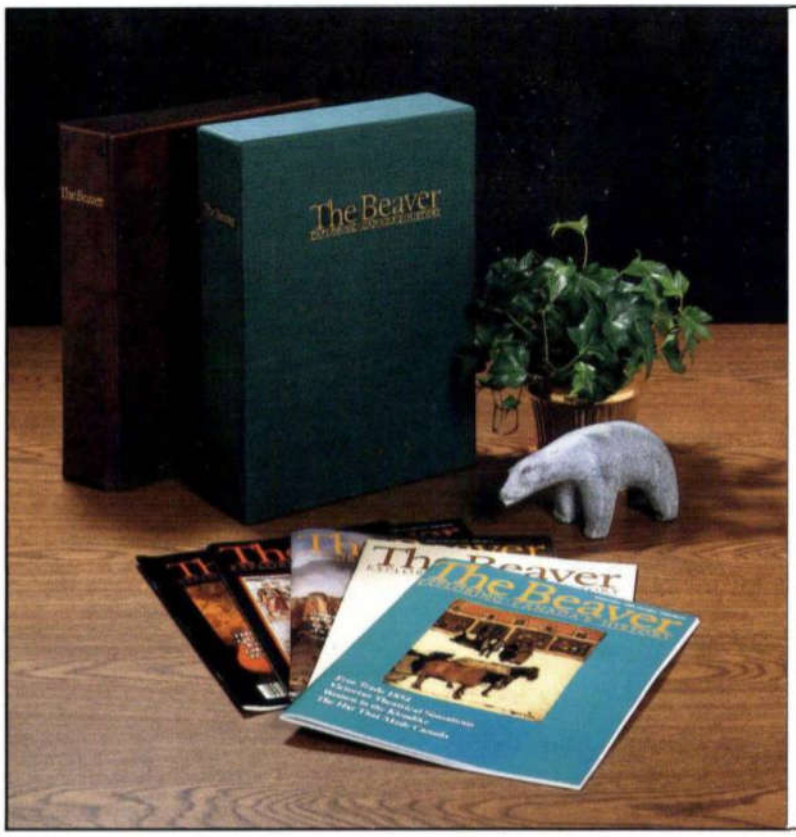

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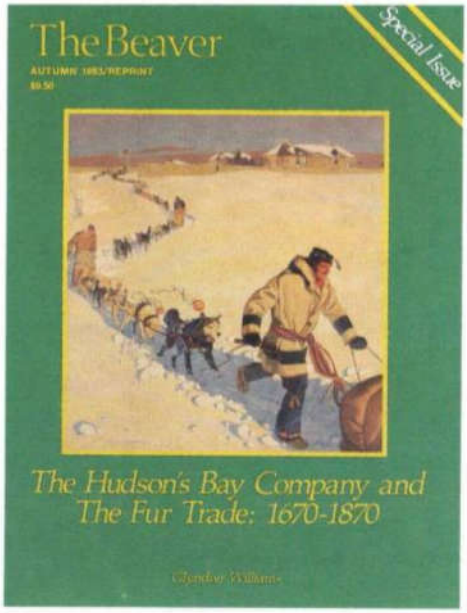

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